

SCHOOLBOYS, TOUGHS AND ADULTERESSES:
REPRESENTATIONS OF DESIRE
IN THE FICTION OF MISHIMA YUKIO

THESIS

SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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ABSTRACT

This thesis addresses the varying ways in which sexual desire is portrayed in a range of fictional works by Mishima Yukio. It presents a fresh examination of the central role that desire plays in Mishima's work, in the light of contemporary literary theory, particularly cultural materialism and queer theory. The works discussed include a number of Mishima's popular entertainment novels.

The representations of aspects of desire, including same-sex desire, sado-masochism and heterosexual relationships outside marriage, are compared to contemporary writing on these in Japanese non-literary discourse, as well as earlier literary representations of, in particular, same-sex desire. The influence of sexology and psychoanalysis is examined, specifically in the forms in which these accounts of desire were communicated to the Japanese reading public in journalism of the period. The relation of Mishima's fiction to popular journalism in general is discussed, with reference to the *kasutori* magazines of the Occupation period and women's magazines of the high-growth era.

Mishima's strategies for representing sexual desire for men are discussed, including his use of literary allusion and his portrayal of women as desiring subjects. Aspects of his narrative technique are identified as camp, in that they use borrowed cultural authority to express desire from a non-dominant subject position. The use of allusion in *Forbidden Colours* is examined to show how Mishima used allusion to elaborate paradigms for same-sex desire other than those available in contemporary discourse.

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Introduction

This thesis addresses the varying ways in which sexual desire is portrayed in a range of fictional works by Mishima Yukio. 'Schoolboys, toughs and adulteresses' represent three recurring themes in Mishima's treatment of desire in his writing, but also three different ways in which the subject is examined in what follows. The figuring of same-sex desire as love between schoolboys is a trope to be found in much Japanese fiction that addresses desire between men and that was produced between the Meiji period and the start of Mishima's literary career. This is a pattern that Mishima used in his early fiction, but one that he developed in significant ways. Tough, masculine men recur throughout Mishima's fiction as objects of desire, both for women and for men. Women in adulterous relationships are also to be found repeatedly in his stories, but as desiring subjects, through whom the sexual attraction of men can be represented. These three considerations – patterns of desire, the particular objects of desire and the subject positions from which desire is represented – are the focus of this study.

The forms taken by sexual relationships and sexual desire in Mishima's fiction are very varied, but he first came to critical and public attention with a number of stories that deal with same-sex desire and so the focus of this study is, in the first place, on the representations of desire between men. A sexual relationship between two women is treated in Mishima's short story 'Fruit' (*Kajitsu*, 1950), but the vast majority of his fictional output deals with the desire of

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men, either as subjects or objects of that desire. Much of this study, therefore, focuses on those stories in which same-sex desire features most prominently: *Confessions of a Mask* (*Kamen no kokuhaku*, 1949) and *Forbidden Colours* (*Kinjiki*, 1951-52), as well as a number of short stories. Another focus is on those stories in which the desire of women for men is dealt with most directly and, as a result, greater prominence is given to Mishima's popular fiction (much of it initially serialized in women's magazines) than in most critical studies.

CRITICAL TENDENCIES

A number of tendencies can be identified in critical writing on Mishima which contribute to a general failure to give an adequate account of the place in his fiction of sexuality and sexual desire, especially in those of his works which deal directly with same-sex desire. The first of these is a reluctance to see sexuality as itself an organizing motif or a primary narrative focus, so that it must always be given a subsidiary role arising from other concerns. The obvious attention to sexuality and desire then has to be explained by something else, which the critical eye can discern beneath it. Susan Napier, treating Mishima together with Ōe Kenzaburō, has written of their works as 'compensatory alternative visions' in response to their disappointment with postwar Japan (Napier 1991: 11). She describes 'a microcosmos of humiliation, chaos, and loss, in which sexuality serves as a redemption, a compensation, an escape, or a means of control' (44). The starting point of Mishima's attention to sexuality, then, is a disappointment which has nothing to do with sexual desire. It is a *reaction to* a sense of

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disaster and disorder in a non-sexual realm. In other words, Mishima *ends up* writing about sex because he wants to express a sense of loss, not because he started by wanting to write about it. In this sense, sex and sexual desire come to stand for loss in metaphorical terms, but also we can see in this reading, where desire 'serves as' compensation or escape, a slide into psychology and already we are slipping away from Mishima's texts towards Mishima himself.

This psychological attempt to account for the presence of same-sex desire in the narrative is explicit in Matsumoto Tōru's reading of *Confessions of a Mask* (Matsumoto 1976: 26), in which he attempts to read the latter part of the novel, dealing with the narrator's relationship with his friend's sister, Sonoko, through Mishima's earlier short story *Preparations for the Night* (*Yoru no shitaku*, 1947). The events of the story are indeed very close to part of *Confessions of a Mask*: a student visits a girl in the country town to which she has been evacuated in the summer of 1945 and contrives to be alone with her, but finds that faced with the possibility of a sexual encounter his desire evaporates. Matsumoto points out that, whereas *Confessions of a Mask* attributes the inability of the narrator to have feelings for Sonoko to 'perversity', the short story puts failure down to a simple lack of desire, and he suggests that the narrator's lack of response in *Confessions of a Mask* is more credibly explained in the same way. This argument – taking two texts to be somehow the 'same thing' and substituting parts of one for parts of the other – is one that could be made either way, but it does seem particularly forced, given that the larger part of *Confessions of a Mask* is taken up by the narrator's elaboration of his 'perverse' desires. The psychological turn in Matsumoto's reading leads him to take what are two discrete texts as elements in a single puzzle relating to the psychology of one individual.

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If Napier's references to loss and compensation look to both psychology and metaphor, other critics have mined a rich vein of metaphor in their attempts to account for Mishima's articulation of desire, especially same-sex desire, and this relegation of desire to a metaphorical, and therefore secondary, relationship to other, more 'central' themes, is the third critical tendency to be identified. Noguchi Takehiko is one of many who have seen the narrator's homosexuality in *Confessions of a Mask* as a metaphor for the sterility of postwar Japanese society and a sense of alienation from that society, agreeing with Satō Hideaki that the central argument of *Confessions of a Mask* is an existential one (Noguchi 1968). However, Satō explicitly rejects Noguchi's purely metaphorical reading, arguing that the novel is both a confession of a 'strange' sexuality and a confrontation with 'problems of self-identification, self and other, self within the other' (Satō 1991: 81). Of *Confessions of a Mask* specifically, Napier says that impotence in the area of socially acceptable sexuality is to be taken as a criticism of Japanese society, although her mixture of psychology and metaphor leaves it unclear whether she sees sexuality in the novel as a conscious strategy to allude to social sterility or something that emerges (within the author) from changed social conditions: 'The fact that [Mishima's] own private sexual preoccupations came to the fore so strongly in 1949 is surely related to the destruction of the traditional, compartmentalized Japanese culture wrought by the defeat' (Napier: 54).

Reading fiction as metaphor is not, in itself, objectionable. The problem arises when the identification of the metaphor is allowed to circumvent an examination of what is actually present in the text, as if this was not of any significance in its own right. Yamanouchi Hisaaki

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has written of *Confessions of a Mask*: 'One of its peculiar features is the author's uninhibited treatment of sexual perversion. What matters, however, is not sexual perversion as such, but its wider implications' (Yamanouchi 1972: 5). More generally, Yamanouchi asserts that '... it is irrelevant to wonder whether Mishima was himself perverted. Perversion in Mishima's novels is simply the means of presenting a larger theme, that is, the clash between fulfilment of life and pursuit of aesthetic values, and the necessity to sacrifice the former to the latter' (8).

If sexual desire in Mishima's fiction is not to be explained psychologically or reinterpreted metaphorically, it can simply be relegated to the background. Some recent criticism has certainly dealt directly with the realm of desire and, in particular, Matsumoto Tōru's *Mishima Yukio: erosu no geki* (*Mishima Yukio: the Drama of Eros*, Matsumoto 2005) provides some fresh perspectives, but depends rather insistently on the idea of a development in the author's fiction that mirrors the concept of homosexuality as a temporary stage in an individual's development (see Chapter Two of this study). The concept to which desire is most frequently forced to give way in critical writing generally is nihilism. This is taken as the interpretive key in Roy Starrs' study of Mishima, which traces the influence on his work of Nietzsche and German thought, describing the importance of Thomas Mann and Mori Ōgai as models. Of *Confessions of a Mask*, he writes: 'Though I would not agree with those Japanese critics who, perhaps out of some misplaced moral fastidiousness, regard the hero's homosexuality as entirely 'metaphorical' and therefore inconsequential, it is, in a sense, secondary to the novel's main argument' (Starrs 1994: 38) This main argument is the narrator's attempt to portray himself as a nihilistic tragic hero, so that the more negative the description of his life

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the more tragic he appears, for a tragic hero requires tragic faults and the homosexuality and sadism of the narrator's fantasies primarily serve this purpose. Starrs connects Mishima to Mann in 'a continual, obsessive return to the themes of sickness, deformity, crime and decadence as obvious symptoms of the nihilism which pervades modern society' (10). This inclusion of (same-sex) desire in a general category of the negative precludes any examination of how, or indeed whether, that desire is portrayed as negative.

The final and most insidious tendency is for critical discussion of Mishima's work to slide into biographical speculation, using assumptions about his own politics or personal history as a basis for interpreting his fiction. At least two critics (Okuno Takeo and Maeda Sadaaki; see Matsumoto, Satō, Inoue 2000: 71)) have attempted to interpret *Confessions of a Mask* in terms of the Freudian Oedipus complex, applying psychoanalytical methods directly to the text as though to an individual outside the text. This individual outside the text is inevitably identified with the author, so that the details of the author's life, and the analysis of these, are taken as supplementary evidence in reading the text, and vice versa. Certainly a work like *Confessions of a Mask*, with its selection of events clearly influenced by the form of the psychoanalytical case study, provides a rich source of material for such an analysis, but it would be more fruitful to take these formal similarities as an object of study in themselves rather than assuming that the critic can act as psychoanalyst. In any case, there is no stable object for analysis. Sugimoto Kazuhiro has usefully identified three different narratorial positions in *Confessions of a Mask*: the narrator describing and identifying with his younger self, the narrator describing his younger self with a sense of objective distance, and the narrator describing his contemporary

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self (Sugimoto 1991: 104). Which of these provides us with the material for analysis, and are we to analyse the narrator or his younger self? It is clear from these considerations that to collapse the narrator with the author is problematic indeed.

APPROACHING DESIRE

How, then, can we deal with the articulation of desire and sexuality in Mishima's fiction? It is worth, first, pointing out the pervasiveness of these themes in his work. Same-sex desire is the focus of *Confessions of a Mask* and *Forbidden Colours*, as well as the short stories 'Cigarette' (*Tabako*, 1946) and 'Fruit', while the sexuality of characters in *Kyōko's House* (*Kyōko no ie*, 1958-59), *School of the Flesh* (*Nikutai no gakkō*, 1963), and *The Temple of Dawn* (*Akatsuki no tera*, 1968) is of significance to the narrative. More generally, sexual relationships and sexual desire form the narrative focus of the novels *Thirst for Love* (*Ai no kawaki*, 1950), *The Sport of Beasts* (*Kemono no tawamure*, 1961), *The Sailor Who Fell From Grace With the Sea* (*Gogo no eikō*, 1963), *Spring Snow* (*Haru no yuki*, 1965) and *Music* (*Ongaku*, 1965), as well as numerous short stories.

The changes undergone by literary criticism in recent years, especially in the fields of gender studies and feminist criticism, as well as the development of queer theory and cultural materialism as critical disciplines, offer a chance to approach these themes directly, without reading the entirety of Mishima's fiction through the lens of nihilism and nationalist politics. Such a new approach is most needed in our understanding of Mishima's explicit treatment of

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the theme of same-sex desire, where it is not an exaggeration to say that previous criticism has in some cases been coloured by homophobia.

Although what has come to be known as 'queer theory' or 'queer criticism' would appear to have a narrow focus on what the critic identifies as 'gay/lesbian writing,' the ideological thrust of queer theory is inclusive rather than separatist. If it can be said to have a core tenet, it is that nothing in the sphere of sexuality is to be taken as *given*, which is to say: not ideologically constructed. On this basis, the sexual is not to be treated as a biological, and therefore separate, category not available to cultural analysis and critical inquiry, nor can one form or aspect of sexuality be treated as more in need of explanation than another. Queer theory therefore takes the sexual as continuous with the cultural and does not take any one form or representation of desire as more or less culturally constructed than any other. In this sense, there is a clear analogy with some strains of feminist theory, which have sought to distinguish between biological sex and culturally constructed gender, taking what have been considered 'natural' aspects of gender as suitable objects of cultural analysis. Among those who have most forcefully argued against the 'naturalness' of gender is Judith Butler, whose problematizing of what is 'natural' and what is constructed in the realms of gender and sexuality is one of the foundations of queer theory (see Butler 1990).

A corollary of this unwillingness to see any representation of desire and sexuality as not culturally constructed is the rejection of normative views of these. This is certainly a fruitful and necessary discipline for the literary critic. Peter Wolfe is clearly led by a normative view of sexuality into an unproductively combative approach to his subject when he writes of

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Mishima: 'Dickens pondered the cultural and spiritual malaise of Victorian England as much as Mishima did that of postwar Japan. But he also celebrated romantic and family love' (Wolfe 1989: 43). In the context of literary representation, how does 'celebrate' differ from 'represent'? Given that Wolfe's argument is designed to show the greater universality of Dickens' fiction, 'celebrated' must here mean 'accepted uncritically' or 'is taken by the reader/critic to have been accepting uncritically,' as if romantic and family love is in a category so different from that of sexual perversion that the one requires celebration while the other deserves dissection. Queer criticism would start from the premise that both are equally open to examination, deconstruction and creative distortion. Indeed, this premise is not proprietary to queer criticism. Takayuki Yokota-Murakami, in his study of the problematics of comparative literature in relation to representations of love and desire, addresses the tendency of humanist criticism to separate certain concepts, including that of *love*, from the category of 'ordinary' ideas, such as, for example, *snow*, with specific ideological consequences:

This is explained by humanist philosophy from the fact that 'love' concerns a human activity or a feeling while 'snow' is a physical phenomenon external to us. However, 'masturbation' does not constitute a tenet of humanism although it is undoubtedly a human activity, most prevalent at that. Neither does homosexual love. It is heterosexual desire alone which is endowed with the title of human passion shared by every human being. An inventory of humanism is, then, an ideological formulation, reflecting a specific outlook on life and a conscious choice of constitutive elements. (Yokota-Murakami 1998: 76)

If queer theory is inclusive, it is also insistent upon distinction. Perhaps the founding error of a normative approach to sexuality is to think that we automatically know what we are talking about. If we accept that sexuality and desire are culturally constructed, it must follow that these

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constructions are unstable. Queer approaches to literary and cultural history make much of the nineteenth-century Western conceptualization of sexuality, the paradigm shift by which sexuality came to be not just something you do, but something that defines what you are – a shift that leads Foucault to speak of homosexuality's 'date of birth' which he puts in 1870 (Foucault 1981: 43). That concepts are unstable across time and between cultures is, of course, a commonplace, but the tendency to place sexuality in a separate category from culture combines with the difficulty of self-perception and self-reporting in the field of sexuality to encourage the use of language that fails to define and distinguish between the objects it claims to describe. This becomes doubly dangerous when we are working in a field – such as Japanese literary studies in a European academic context – in which translation is implicit. That Waley's translation of *The Tale of Genji* lifted Lady Murasaki out of Heian Japan and deposited her in a Victorian boudoir is an obvious case of creative distortion in translation. In less obvious cases, too, we must recognize the distortions we impose before we can read critically. For discussing same-sex desire, vocabularies proliferate and where translation is involved it is necessary to be vigilant. When Mishima's fiction explicitly mentions *dōseiai*, *tōsaku*, *nanshoku*, or *gei* we should note his choice and when his narrative implicitly refers to the concepts these describe we should be aware of differences. As far as Mishima's representation of sexuality is concerned, the concepts and their context can seem more familiar than they are. Critics, both Japanese and non-Japanese, can mistakenly assume they know what these mean because they take each to be synonymous with all of the others. Therefore this study is careful to reflect Mishima's actual usage in his texts, so that 'homosexual(ity)' (unless otherwise indicated) is used only as a

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translation of *dōseiai*(*sha*) and 'gay' is used with reference to Mishima's texts only where the English word is used by Mishima himself. 'Same-sex (desire)' is generally used throughout to refer to desire for, or sexual relations between, persons of the same biological sex, as far as possible without implying any specific conceptualization of that desire.

The first of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's axioms for the study of sexuality and literature in the introduction of her *Epistemology of the Closet* is therefore misleadingly banal: 'People are different from each other' (Sedgwick 1990: 22). While Sedgwick's earlier work, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*, destabilizes the concepts of homo- and heterosexuality in order to produce reinterpretations of (mostly) nineteenth-century European literature, *Epistemology of the Closet* insists upon the indivisibility of sexuality from culture and attempts to examine discourses of sexuality from the perspective of gay identity. She asserts that canon formation defines the ways in which it is permissible to link texts, and that this definition has excluded sexuality as a comparative tool (48). Queer criticism follows Sedgwick in insisting that it is permissible to use sexuality alone to link texts, to use sexuality as a category of inquiry. Sedgwick identifies a number of strategies by which the significance of sexuality is denied, including this: 'The author or the author's important attachments may very well have been homosexual – but it would be provincial to let so insignificant a fact make any difference at all to our understanding of any serious project of life, writing, or thought.' In short, she sums up these strategies as: 'It didn't happen; it doesn't make any difference; it didn't mean anything; it doesn't have interpretive consequences' (53). The last of these denials especially – it doesn't have interpretive consequences – is what lies behind the ways identified above in which

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criticism has failed to deal with desire in Mishima's work, leading to assertions such as Yamanouchi's that 'what matters ... is not sexual perversion as such.'

As suggested above, queer theory may be viewed as falling within, or at least allied to, cultural materialism. If queer theory refuses to divide the sexual from the cultural, cultural materialism refuses to divide the literary from society or culture in the wider sense. As a consequence, cultural materialist critics have felt free to read literary texts along with legal, journalistic, private and other texts as parts of larger discursive formations in which each plays a part in the production of the other. The second and third chapters of this study, in particular, read Mishima's representations of desire alongside journalistic and medical writing in order to identify where his fiction reflects, and where it departs from, these wider discourses. Cultural materialism 'privileges power relations as the most important context for interpreting texts' (Brannigan 1998: 9) and in this attention to power relations it shares with queer theory a reliance on the work of Foucault. Jonathan Dollimore, much of whose work is in the vein of queer criticism but who also describes his work as cultural materialist, shows how he does not expect literary criticism to address itself entirely to a separate category of the literary when he writes that 'reading culture involves trying to read the historical process within the social process, and in a way adequately aware of the complexity and discriminations of both, and with as much sensitivity and intelligence as possible' (Dollimore 1991: 24).

Inasmuch as this study aims to present Mishima's fiction in the light of queer theory or cultural materialism, there are clearly objections to this approach. The most obvious of these is the extent to which queer theory in the study of literature, as it is practiced by such critics as

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Sedgwick, Dollimore or Alan Sinfield, is focussed on Western culture. The thrust of much of this criticism is to reinterpret social relationships portrayed/constructed in Western literatures and to reveal the hidden voices that have not been heard by earlier criticism. In doing so, they relate the conventional interpretation of relationships and the failure to hear those other voices to the legal, moral and social prohibition of certain sexual behaviours and to the simultaneous emergence and pathologizing, in the nineteenth century, of the concept of (homo)sexuality. Since the theoretical anchor for much work in this field is Foucault, particularly his *History of Sexuality*, which deals exclusively with European history, its relevance to non-European literatures might justifiably be questioned.

To employ this critical apparatus in reading Japanese literature of any sort seems impractical. To ignore the fact that the historical framework of prohibition and of the construction of sexuality is wholly different to the case of Japan would lead to a gravely distorted reading. However the advantage of queer theory is that it is largely untheoretical, concerning itself rather with the specific. The underlying concern with power relations necessarily recognizes that these are specific in terms of time and place, so that the critic seeks to examine the interrelationship between literary production and its social and historical context, with an awareness of the specific conditions of each. The purpose of cultural materialist criticism is not to impose a model derived from nineteenth-century fiction on a reading of Elizabethan drama or vice versa, and it certainly should not be to impose either of these, or any other, on a reading of twentieth-century Japanese fiction. Consequently, if any word is overused in what follows, it is likely to be 'specific.'

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One further consequence of a cultural materialist approach is of relevance to Mishima's fiction. The willingness to read literary texts without categorizing them as separate from non-literary texts necessarily implies a willingness not to exclude any subset of literary texts from consideration. Mishima's output includes loosely two kinds of novel, which are distinguished by the complexity of their language, the place of their original publication and their readership. Critical writing has generally separated his 'popular' entertainment novels (which were mostly first serialized in mass-circulation – often women's – magazines and are characterized by a simpler vocabulary) from his 'serious' works of 'pure' literature. Critical attention has, unsurprisingly, focussed on his serious novels, although the categorization is not always clear-cut and this tendency is considerably less marked among Japanese critics than among those writing in English, which is not unrelated to the fact that the category of serious novels roughly coincides with those that have been translated into English. This study addresses both streams of Mishima's fiction, although it takes account of the different circumstances of publication of the entertainment novels.

The first chapter of this study provides a purely literary context for Mishima's stories of same-sex desire. It provides a brief survey of modern Japanese literary representations of desire between men up until the publication of Mishima's early works, before examining where Mishima reflected these and where, and how, he departed from them.

The second chapter widens the scope of comparison to put Mishima's fiction in the context of

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non-literary discourses on desire, in particular the ideas of sexology and psychoanalysis as they were available to Japanese readers. The relation of Mishima's texts, in particular *Confessions of a Mask* and *Forbidden Colours*, to psychoanalytical explanations of desire is considered.

The third chapter looks at the relation of Mishima's fiction to popular journalistic accounts of desire, in particular the titillating publications of the immediate postwar period and the women's magazines in which Mishima serialized some of his entertainment novels in the late 1950s and early 1960s.

The fourth chapter focuses on the representation of women as desiring subjects, including an analysis of a number of the entertainment novels published in women's magazines. It examines how these stories provided an alternative to normative views of sexual behaviour.

The fifth chapter discusses how Mishima used a variety of mechanisms for representing desire other than in heteronormative terms, and examines how the concept of camp may be used to describe aspects of his narrative technique, including the use of allusion.

The final chapter develops the examination of allusion, focusing on its use in *Forbidden Colours* to represent same-sex desire from a subject position not readily available in contemporary discourse.

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References to Mishima's texts are (except where otherwise indicated) to the complete works published by Shinchōsha from 2000 onwards (Mishima 2000), abbreviated in the body of this study to 'MZ' (for *Mishima Yukio zenshū*) with volume numbers given.

The translations of quotations from Mishima's texts are my own throughout. Many of his major works of fiction are available in excellent English translations, and my decision not to use these is certainly not motivated by any inadequacy in the published translations. However, as much of the argument in this study depends on the specific choices made by Mishima in his use of language, it has been easier to produce my own translations in order to emphasize these choices. I also made the decision for the sake of consistency, as I quote extensively from those of Mishima's works that have not been translated into English.

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A QUEER GENEALOGY

The critic Nakamura Mitsuo made one of the more well-known remarks on *Forbidden Colours* in a 1952 discussion on Mishima with Usui Yoshimi: '*Forbidden Colours* deals with *nanshoku*, doesn't it? Now, almost nobody knows what *nanshoku* is, and because we don't know about it, whatever Mishima writes, we're at a loss. (Laughs.) With love between men and women, people are likely to make all kinds of comments. But with *nanshoku* Mishima can pull us around however he pleases' (Nakamura 1952: 164). The implication is that nothing in the critic's experience can have prepared him for a critical consideration of Mishima's treatment of such a subject, that modern Japanese literature prior to Mishima provided nothing comparable. In a similar vein, Donald Keene accepts Mishima's own remark that *Confessions of a Mask* was 'the first Japanese novel to deal with homosexuality since Saikaku' (Keene 1984: 1184). However neither Nakamura's laughing disavowal nor Mishima's own claim to complete originality will stand scrutiny.

Eve Kossofsky Sedgwick has observed how 'regimes of truth', including criticism, wield ignorance as a tool for avoiding and silencing discussion of same-sex desire, stating that ignorances 'far from being pieces of the originary dark, are produced by and correspond to particular knowledges and circulate as part of particular regimes of truth' (Sedgwick: 8). The

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particular ignorance deployed by Nakamura is a surprising disregard for the variety of appearances of same-sex desire in modern Japanese literature before the publication of Mishima's stories on the subject. Ignorance is not a useful starting point for examining Mishima's representations of this desire in his early fiction, so it is worth describing in brief the earlier representations of desire between men, of which Nakamura apparently claimed to be unaware, and which Mishima may have found it convenient to ignore in order to emphasise the originality of his themes. The sixth of the 'axioms' that Sedgwick sets out in *Epistemology of the Closet* is: 'The relation of gay studies to debates on the literary canon is, and had best be, tortuous' (48). Her point is that, in Western/European literary studies, the way in which texts are read is disciplined by the way they are canonized and that the process of canonization, or the formation of literary history, has made it impermissible to use sexuality to link texts, so that, for example, it would have seemed strange to link two texts such as Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and Melville's *Billy Budd*, because the process of canonization had defined them as quite separate kinds of fiction. It is much the same problem of canonization or literary history that lay behind Nakamura's claim to ignorance and this particular ignorance allows critics to compare *Confessions of a Mask* and *Forbidden Colours* with anything but other Japanese fictional treatments of desire between men. Indeed, (with the exception of Reichert's study of Meiji literature, Reichert 2006) criticism still does not provide a clear 'queer' genealogy for modern Japanese fiction. Literary/historical contextualizations of Mishima's fiction have tended to concentrate on aesthetic connections, but a concentration on thematic connections, linking his fiction to earlier fiction that deals with same-sex desire, provides a different set of

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comparisons.

As is demonstrated by the brief attempt at such a genealogy below, literary representations of desire between men show a clear shift in paradigms for same-sex desire between Meiji fiction and Mishima's entry onto the literary scene, as well as elements of continuity in the recurrence of certain topoi and a constant attention to the (pre-Meiji) Japanese past. Attention to the past is very much to the fore in the short novel *Hige-otoko* (1890-96, translated as *The Bearded Samurai*) by Kōda Rohan (1867-1947). This story mixes historical and fictional characters in an account of the actions of both sides (the Oda-Tokugawa and Takeda forces) at the battle of Nagashino in 1575. The emotional action of the story concerns the (historical) Tokugawa general Sakai Tadatsugu and his protégé Yanagi Kotarō Muneharu, who is the orphaned son of a friend of Tadatsugu and who is described as beautiful, in poor health and desperate to die in battle. The relationship between Tadatsugu and Kotarō is not overtly sexual at any point, but in Tadatsugu's expressions of his love for Kotarō the physical beauty and frailty of the boy plays an important part and, given the historical setting of the novel, it seems reasonable to interpret their relationship as that of *nenja* and *wakashu* (or older lover and younger beloved – see Chapter Six of this study for a fuller discussion of this paradigm). Indeed, some details of the narrative seem designed to emphasise the role of same-sex desire in the characters' motivation. Tadatsugu's (fictional) counterpart, the Takeda warrior Kasai Dairoku, is unwilling to kill Kotarō when he encounters him in battle because of the boy's physical beauty. Dairoku introduces himself early in the story as having been stationed for many years under Kōsaka Masanobu, the (historical) Takeda general known to have been the younger lover (*wakashu*) of

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Takeda Shingen (Kōda 1985: 180). When he is later confronted by Kotarō's sister, Dairoku suggests that he is less affected by her beauty than he was by Kotarō's: 'No sophisticated prince of the Heike clan, I wouldn't know what to do if I met the fairest of women on the night before my death' (231).

Tadatsugu's speech to Kotarō upon the boy's arrival at the camp is effusive. What is striking is not just that he expresses affection for Kotarō, but that he clearly describes Kotarō as the *primary* object of his affection:

Ever since you became big enough to ride a horse, I've dreamed of spending one whole day riding side by side with you, hunting rabbit or pheasant. Alas, in these turbulent times it has remained only a hope to this day. [...] But at every critical moment, whether in war or in peace, my mind always races towards you: I settle this matter in such and such a way and survive this crisis thus and so; when this or that problem is disposed of, I shall tell Kotarō all about it; he compliments me on what I have done and flashes a smile of approval. [...] A flame of embarrassment sears me just to think that you might frown in disappointment and disapproval if I failed to conduct myself judiciously in some affair. The prospect of such unbearable humiliation has always driven me to do my desperate best, for your image is etched in my heart even in a moment of life or death. (196-97)

However, it is Dairoku who gives the clearest account of Kotarō's physical beauty. Having encountered him in battle, he tries his best to spare the boy, but is forced to kill him by military circumstances and the boy's determination to fight. After his capture, he relates the story of that day:

Just as the blade was about to touch his throat, I had a close look at this foe of mine. His face, flushed and moist from excitement, was as pure and fair as a glistening white jewel. His tightly pulled petals of lips were flaming red, his soft eyebrows blue-black, and his rage-widened eyes shimmering with gentle dew. A beautiful young boy, too delicate to be handled by rough hands. [...] What an adorable boy, already showing such promise of valour! What would be the harm if I let him live? How can I put a cruel blade to his snow white skin? (243)

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Apart from the sexual attraction of the boy in Dairoku's description of him, there is also a definite sexual suggestion in Kotarō's refusal to be put aside by the older man. While Dairoku considers him too young and beautiful to kill, Kotarō insists on lunging after him again and again 'panting and gasping' (246). Rohan overlays the meeting between the two with an anachronistic sense of furtiveness to match the sexual tension, in that they come upon each other in a remote spot and Dairoku suggests that they keep their encounter secret (so that no one need know that he has spared Kotarō's life). As a result, there is something secretive and clandestine about their meeting, which Dairoku acknowledges when he says that 'if someone should stumble upon us now, we'd be in trouble' (245).

Rohan's story of fearless, selfless samurai warriors places great emphasis on the men's code of loyalty and noble conduct, but it would be wrong to identify their relationships as purely homosocial, as the descriptions of Kotarō show. The adult characters' ultra-masculinity and the pre-modern ideals of the samurai code are mixed in with an acknowledgement of same-sex desire, specifically adult men's desire for boys. The samurai ideal of selflessness and masculinity is set in a world without women, as Dairoku's comment in captivity demonstrates. References to the pre-modern past are a recurring feature of literary representations of same-sex desire and reflect the tendency of Westernizing writers of the Meiji 'enlightenment' to identify modernity with procreative heterosexual monogamy, to the exclusion of all other forms of sexual expression, which were consequently identified with the pre-modern past (see Pflugfelder: 272-83). However, the association of such desire with masculinity and all-male environments was also a feature of contemporary (Meiji) society and literature. As a social

phenomenon, this association went along with the problematization of same-sex desire by sexologists and medical authorities, who saw it as something that could be prevented by prudent measures, such as coeducation and the abolition of dormitories. Pflugfelder has described how sexologists of the Meiji period and after sought to map a topography of homosexuality (*dōseiai*), characterizing 'a number of social spaces as endemic sites of *dōseiai* in contemporary life, identifying these less on the basis of statistical research than on an impressionistic blend of common knowledge, casual observation, and textual familiarity' (283). This topography focused on schools, especially dormitories, prisons, and military barracks.

MEIJI SCHOOLBOYS

It is in the context of one of these social spaces, the school dormitory, that same-sex desire appears in Mori Ōgai's (1862-1922) *Vita Sexualis* (1909). At the age of eleven, the narrator, Kanai, says he entered a private school in Tokyo: 'The school had a dormitory. After classes finished, I dropped in. Here I first heard about *nanshoku*. A boy in the same class as me, called Kagenokōji, who came to school every day on horseback, was the object of the unrequited love of those students in the dormitory. [...] He was a sweet boy with plump, slightly red cheeks. It was also a new discovery to me that the word boy (*shōnen*) was used to mean the passive partner in *nanshoku*' (Ōgai: 110-11). He also relates that an older student in the dormitory 'viewed him as a *shōnen*' and used to give him sweets and squeeze his hand and stroke his cheek. He finds these attentions irksome because he himself 'doesn't have what it takes to be an *Urning*' ('*Urning-taru soshitsu wa nai*,' 111), using the word coined by German sexologists for

passive homosexuals. The older student eventually asks Kanai to get into bed with him and, after failing to achieve his goal, attempts to force himself on Kanai with the aid of a classmate. When he relates this episode to his father, it elicits no surprise at all. At the age of thirteen, he moves into the dormitory of the Tokyo English Academy, where sexual relations between boys are equally prevalent. There he is again the object of older boys' attention, being one of the youngest boys in the dormitory. These older boys, described as being mostly in their twenties, divide into two groups: the *kōha* ('hard clique') and the more numerous *nanpa* ('soft clique').¹ The *kōha* are described as the more masculine and serious group and as coming mostly from Kyushu, and it is they who pursue the younger boys and read stories of love between samurai (Ōgai: 114). The *nanpa*, who are sexually interested in girls and pornographic illustrations, are described as more effeminate and dissipated. In spite of his stated lack of any interest in sexual involvement, Kanai becomes firm friends with two of the *kōha*, his roommate Koga and Kojima. Although the general tenor of Ōgai's novel insists on a disavowal of sexual desire on the part of Kanai, expressed as a rejection of sexual obsession, the picture of the *kōha* is by no means negative. Their rough masculinity and their rejection of the effeminacy and dissolution of the *nanpa* are presented as admirable in the eyes of Kanai, even though he does not share their sexual attraction to boys.

The association of same-sex desire and sexual activity with the school and dormitory environment seems, in its literary representation, to be a matter of common knowledge rather than any cause for scandal at this time. In *Vita Sexualis*, the reaction of Kanai's father to his

¹ The English translation by Ninomiya and Goldstein is slightly unhelpful on this point, translating the terms as 'queers' and 'mashers' respectively, which obscures the nuances of *kōha* and *nanpa*.

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first encounter with the phenomenon shows this to be the case and at the English Academy the *nanpa* and *kōha* discuss each other's tastes quite openly. Indeed, Kanai himself is happy enough to have his hand squeezed and his cheek stroked as long as he doesn't have to go any further. The familiarity of sexual relations between older and younger students is also attested by Tanizaki Jun'ichirō's autobiographical account of his childhood, *Yōshō jidai* (translated as *Childhood Years*), and in similar terms. He describes how he was often pursued by older youths and puts this down to the influx of men from Satsuma (Tanizaki 1990: 69 and 95). Tanizaki's pursuers of boys are, like Ōgai's, marked by their masculinity of dress and their Kyushu origins.

STRANGE DESIRES

Another of Tanizaki's writings shows how paradigms for literary representations of sexuality underwent a shift in the early twentieth century. His 1911 short story 'The Secret' (*Himitsu*) focuses on the narrator's enjoyment of dressing as a woman and wandering the streets of Asakusa. For Tanizaki's narrator, his cross-dressing adventure leads to a sexual encounter with a woman, but almost the same story – of a world-weary man cutting himself off from society and finding pleasure in a number of curious behaviours, including wandering around Asakusa and cross-dressing – is found in Edogawa Ranpo's (1894-1965) story 'The Walker in the Attic' (*Yaneura no sanposha*, 1925) and in Ranpo's story this leads the man to encounters with other men in cinemas. Both Tanizaki's and Ranpo's versions of this narrative present a melange of desires for discovery of new and strange things, enjoyment of the hidden faces of modern urban life, sexual adventure and criminality. This is the mixture of interests and tropes that made up

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the phenomenon of *ero-guro-nansensu* (or *ero*, *guro* and *nansensu*) of the early Showa era and mingled in the concept of *ryōki* - 'curiosity hunting' - examined by Jeffrey Angles in the context of fiction and journalism of the interwar years (Angles 2008). Same-sex desire makes frequent appearances in the literature of *ero-guro/ryōki*, but as one facet of a wider interest in all things curious and decadent. In this context, male-male sexuality is figured as somehow cognate with gender ambivalence, something quite different to its connotations of masculinity in Rohan and Ōgai.

The motivation of *ero-guro/ryōki* is very much that of the voyeur, describing the spectacle of strangeness and sharing the enjoyment of it with the reader. To this extent, it is perhaps inevitable that the sense of familiarity evident in the way that same-sex desire appears in *Vita Sexualis* has gone. Along with almost all aspects of sexuality, it is seen through the lens of strangeness. As with much else, same-sex desire comes to be represented in terms of perversity and criminality and so its discussion in the pages of journals such as *Hentai seiyoku* (Perverse Desire) and *Hanzai kagaku* (Criminal Science) is mirrored in fictional representation. The explosion of interest in *ero-guro/ryōki* in the early years of the Showa era was contemporary with the growth of detective fiction as a genre and Ranpo, the most prominent exponent of the genre, made repeated reference in his fiction to same-sex desire, which becomes associated with a diffuse fascination for the perverse, the hidden, the criminal and with gender ambivalence. In Ranpo's 1928 novel *The Beast in the Shadows* (*Injū*), the narrator/investigator solves the mystery of a woman, Mrs. Oyamada, who has been receiving threatening letters from a writer of detective fiction, Ōe Shundei, who has apparently been

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observing every intimate detail of the woman's life. The narrator makes frequent observations on the similarities between the letters and Ōe's stories and on the perversity of the character that produced them. The threats seem to be materialized when the woman's husband is found dead and the narrator subsequently develops a sexual relationship with the widowed Mrs. Oyamada. One of the narrator's discoveries is that Mrs. Oyamada's husband was in the habit of using a horsewhip on her, leaving ugly scars on her body, but this flagellation becomes a part of his sexual relationship with her as well. After describing the late Mr. Oyamada as 'a frightful sadistic sex-maniac', he wonders if he, too, is a pervert (*henshitsusha*) of the same sort (Ranpo: 313). The final discovery is that Ōe Shundei does not exist, but is merely a *nom de plume* for Mrs. Oyamada herself, who is therefore the author of both Ōe's fiction and the threatening letters. The underlying structure of the novel, then, is that the narrator has been drawn into a sado-masochistic sexual relationship with Ōe Shundei, the very man (woman) whose perverse cruelty has motivated his search to solve the mystery. The narrator suggests that gender ambivalence is intimately linked with the writing of detective fiction, describing a woman writer of the genre, Hirayama Hideko, who receives love letters from admiring readers but who is, in fact, a man. He concludes:

All detective story writers, whether it's me or Shundei or Hirayama Hideko, are all monsters. When you're a man and you try pretending to be a woman or your taste for the strange (*ryōki no shumi*) gets carried away, that's how far it goes. One writer wandered around Asakusa at night dressed as a woman. He even simulated love with a man. (348-9)

This clearly recalls the character from Ranpo's *Yaneura no sanposha* and men cruising for men in Asakusa also appear in *Issun-bōshi* (1926-7) and *Ryōki no hate* (1930).

Ranpo's fullest treatment of same-sex desire comes in his second full-length novel, *Kotō no oni*

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(*The Demon of the Lonely Isle*, 1929-30) and this aspect of the novel has been discussed at some length by Jeffrey Angles (Angles 2003). The story follows the main character, Minoura's relationship with his friend Moroto and their investigation of the murder of a woman with whom Minoura was in love. Moroto's sexual attraction to men, and his lack of sexual interest in women, is presented very clearly and his unrequited love for Minoura is a key part of the narrative. Responsibility for the murder is discovered to lie with Moroto's father (the 'demon' of the title) who carries out disfiguring surgery on people who live out their lives on his island off the coast of Japan. The two men travel to the island, where they discover some hidden treasure and free the victims of Moroto's father. Moroto's sexual attraction to men is frequently described as grotesque and perverse and Minoura's experience as the object of his desire is sometimes one of fear, especially in an episode towards the end of the novel, when the two of them are lost in the dark in underground caves on the island. Apparently trapped and destined to die in the caves, Moroto makes insistent physical advances on Minoura and the text leaves it unclear whether a sexual encounter takes place, but the description of Moroto is in terms of Minoura's fear and revulsion. Nevertheless, Minoura's experience of being desired by a man is described fully in the course of the novel and Moroto is given several opportunities to speak of his emotions and his desire. Although he is at one point suspected by Minoura of the woman's murder, he turns out to have investigated the incident himself, motivated by his love for Minoura, and ultimately plays a heroic role in breaking with his monstrous father and using his own medical training to save some of his father's victims. Some have seen in Moroto's portrayal a standard homophobic representation of same-sex desire as grotesque, repulsive and

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cognate with sadism (see Driscoll 1998). However, Angles relates the representation of Moroto's desires to 'a distinctive combination of horror and attraction *vis-à-vis* "the strange"' (Angles 2003: 201). Angles points out that the emphasis on the grotesque or perverse aspect of Moroto's desire invariably comes in the opening passages of the instalments in which the novel was originally published and represent an appeal by Ranpo to the readers' interest in *ero-guro* themes, whereas subsequent passages portray Moroto in a more nuanced and sympathetic light. Minoura's own feelings about Moroto certainly combine horror and attraction and this itself is a feature of the *ero-guro/ryōki* representation of desire. It matches the mixture of repulsion and attraction felt by the narrator of *Injū* towards Mrs. Oyamada, especially when flagellation enters their relationship, and is a perhaps inevitable feature of the *ryōki* concept, combining a voyeuristic attraction to the strange/perverse with a reluctance to be implicated directly. Another feature of *ryōki*-related writing was its use of pseudo-scientific terminology to lend authority to its descriptions of 'strange' desire. Articles in *ryōki*-related magazines of the early Showa era and journals such as *Hentai seiyoku* and *Hanzai kagaku* mixed voyeuristic accounts of sexuality with introductions to the theories of sexuality developed by European sexologists and psychoanalysts (a mixture that was revived in the post-war *kasutori* magazines). The narrator of *Injū* throws out a typical snippet of such knowledge when he discloses that Mrs. Oyamada is in fact Ōe Shundei and therefore is herself the author of the threatening letters sent to her: 'According to writings on perverse psychology, hysterical women apparently often send threatening letters to themselves. There are many such cases both in Japan and abroad' (Ranpo: 353). Ranpo pursued an active interest in

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psychoanalysis and from 1933 attended meetings of the *Seishin bunseki kenkyūkai* (Group for Psychoanalytic Research – Angles 2003:4). It is no surprise, then, that one of the words used to describe Moroto in *Kotō no oni* is ‘invert’ (*tōsakusha*), following the Freudian conception of same-sex desire. This psychoanalytical explanation of his sexuality also appears in Moroto’s own belief that his exclusive interest in other men derives from a revulsion for women motivated by sexual assaults on him by his hideous mother when he was a young boy.

THE BISHŌNEN

One of the more positive aspects of the portrayal of Moroto is his physical beauty. He is frequently described as a *bishōnen* (a beautiful youth or ‘pretty boy’), in stark contrast to the grotesque physical appearance of his parents and the unfortunate creatures on the island. The image of the *bishōnen* was central in the fiction of another writer who dealt frequently with same-sex desire in the early Showa era, Inagaki Taruho (1900-1977). William Tyler links the elaboration of the modern image of the *bishōnen* and its association with schoolboys to the same forces that drove the development of literary modernism in Japan. The emergence of a youth market for the publishing industry in the 1920s and the prolongation of education saw a further development of the romanticization of prepubescent youthfulness that already existed in earlier Japanese literature (Tyler: 30-31). As depicted in illustrations and writing in magazines for young readers, the *bishōnen* often partakes of the gender ambivalence associated with 1920s culture in Japan, being girlishly pretty, but dressed in school uniform. In Taruho’s writing the *bishōnen* is one of a number of obsessive motifs that appear throughout his fiction,

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along with stars, the moon and aeroplanes – motifs that are remarkably consistent throughout Taruho's long writing career. In his later writings he dealt directly with aspects of same-sex desire, in essays including '*A-kankaku to V-kankaku*' ('The A Feeling and the V Feeling', 1954), '*Shōnen'ai no bigaku*' ('The Aesthetics of Boy Love', 1958) and "'*Chigo no sōshi*' shikai' ('A Personal Interpretation of the *Chigo no sōshi*', 1963), but his early fiction, of the 1920s and 1930s, often featured pretty boys whose sexual involvement with each other is sometimes explicit and sometimes not. Taruho's stylistic modernism, in which episodic narratives veer into surrealism, produced sometimes confusing stories where it is not possible to say with certainty who is doing what to whom. This is the case in the short story '*Hoshi wo uru mise*' ('A Shop That Sells Stars', 1923), a futurist wander through the streets of Kobe, in which the first-person narrator encounters several of his friends identified only by capital letters. Magic tricks, exotic foreigners and various other vivid aspects of the modern cityscape are mixed in with snippets of stories. One such snippet, which the narrator begins telling to his friend N, involves a boy being waylaid and kidnapped.

'Who? Who says that?'

'M – you know, the lad from the grammar school'

'Ha, ha – that's the sort of thing he'd think up. Still, even if we kidnapped a boy like that there'd be no point. You couldn't put him to work and he's too old to be a *chigo*. (Taruho 1991: 121)

For these students, the possibility of waylaying younger boys still exists, as it had for the older students in Ōgai's *Vita Sexualis* and the language they use to describe boys they might use sexually (*chigo* – a temple acolyte, but implying sexual relations between older priests and younger boys in mediaeval Japan) look to the Japanese past. However, the appreciation of pretty boys as sexual objects is, for them, just one of the pleasures of the modern city.

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In '*R-chan to S no hanashi* – A Sentimental Episode' ('The Story of R-chan and S – A Sentimental Episode', 1924) desire for a boy is the central concern, in this case that of the fourth-year middle school student S for his first-year junior T (also referred to as R-chan). What initially entrances S is the perfection of T's modern and fashionable appearance in his neat school uniform, and subsequently his dimples, his eyes, the back of his neck and his 'flowerlike lips'. T's beauty and his *hai-kara* appearance are portrayed as effeminate, though, and the pink lace handkerchief, which first catches S's admiring eye, also causes T to be teased by another classmate:

'Great hanky, T! It's so sweet! So sweet! So sweet! Your little hanky is so "high collar"! A pink hanky! All scented with perfume! You're such a little sweetheart, such a nice little darling! What a pretty boy! A *bishōnen*!' (Taruho 2008: 361)

Although the attraction of T is aestheticized and focused on his fashionable appearance, the text is quite frank about S's physical desire for him. He makes a habit of watching the first year gym class to see T in his gym kit. T is unable to clear the vaulting horse in one jump and repeatedly lands straight on it, which is a source of embarrassment for T but enjoyment for S: 'S thought to himself, "Now, that's why I love him so! How I'd love to be that vaulting horse!..."' (366). S's fantasies about T do not go beyond taking him away to a deserted island where he could dress T up in handsome clothes and take pictures of him and have a bouncy bed on which to tickle him. However a more physical encounter is hinted at when one of S's classmates teases him about T:

'And it's true about T, isn't it? See, you're blushing!'

'They're making it all up.'

'But you secretly did it with him, right?'

'What do you mean?' (371)

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A similar picture of frank physical desire combined with a vagueness about its consummation is seen in a later story by Taruho, *Fevaritto* (1938). Here, too, the central figure of the *bishōnen* is drawn in terms of gender ambivalence. The story begins with a boy on whose bedroom wall hangs a picture of a boy pulling a thorn from a girl's thigh. He wants to experience the feelings of the *girl* in this sexually suggestive scene. We are then told:

Afraid of getting a suntan, he rarely went out and was in the habit of secretly putting on some light makeup and staring vaguely out of his window. Then one day a slim-waisted sailor, his white hat perched askew on his head, passed by and, noticing the pretty boy indoors, came to a halt as if surprised and beckoned to him with a smile on his face. The boy went to an inn with the sailor. It was the first time he had felt so embarrassed, but at the same time it was the first time he had felt so happy. (Taruho 1991: 148-49)

This scene turns out to be in a book that the protagonist, Tari, is reading, but Tari, too, is a young boy, twelve years old, and clearly identifies with the boy in the book. The same book, we are told, contained various such stories, which 'solved the problems' in Tari's heart. What distinguishes *Fevaritto* from the two earlier stories by Taruho, and from any of the other stories discussed so far, is that it represents the desire of the *bishōnen* himself. That desire is not stated directly, but focuses on a number of suggestive images. These include: a comedy film in which a man accidentally takes his son's laxative, which leads Tari to focus on the still constipated boy; his sister's story of witnessing the doctor examining a school friend of Tari, which involves him examining the boy's anus (she says that if Tari is fussy about his food, they will have him examined that way, too); a visit to the circus, when the young horse riders stood right by Tari in their tights and he could not bring himself to look up. Tari's desire to be in some kind of passive role is hinted at by his obsession with the image of a dying soldier or airman;

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we are told that all his friends are obsessed with war but Tari always dreamt of being *defeated*. He is struck by the image of a young soldier dying on a battlefield in a film he once saw and he goes to great lengths to contrive a photograph of himself in the role of a dying airman.

Tari seems to be more and more surrounded by suggestions of sexual activity, but never quite fully understands what is happening. An older boy, B, invites Tari to join a 'club' he has started, naming several other boys who have already joined (Taruho 1991: 171-2). He spells out what sort of club it is one syllable at a time, but Tari does not understand (and the reader is not told what those syllables are). Older boys have made this sort of invitation to Tari several times, but could never spit out exactly what they meant. These are the kind of older boys who turned up at sports day to train their binoculars on certain of the younger boys. Thinking about what all the boys who B said were members of his club have in common, Tari realises that they all have 'girlishly downturned eyes'. B says he will slip an explanation into Tari's letter box but he must not show it to anyone. Tari can only think that whatever the purpose of the club is, it 'has something to do with the low-ceilinged second floor of B's old-fashioned house, or deserted schoolrooms after class, or the secluded places in parks where nobody goes' (173). B marries and moves house, but Tari sneaks into B's house and finds him up to something. B apologizes for letting a young boy see 'that' and Tari hears B's younger sister crying – but does not see her face. Tari later hears from a girl that B's younger sister had hair on her chest and that B made her call him 'sister'. All this gender confusion gently obfuscates what is actually happening, but some kind of sexual activity is clearly suggested.

What links Taruho's stories to most of the others discussed so far is their location of

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same-sex desire in the context of school. Like *Vita Sexualis*, Taruho's stories suggest that sexual activity between older and younger students is a familiar phenomenon, rather than the strange and grotesque spectacle encountered in Ranpo's fiction. Taruho goes further than either Ōgai or Ranpo in actually representing the desirability of the boy as sexual object and aestheticizes the image of the *bishōnen* as a central motif in his modernist prose. A similar degree of aestheticization of the beautiful boy is seen in a short story by Hori Tatsuo (1904-53), *Moyuru hoo* (1932, translated as 'Les Joues en Feu'). Once again the characters are schoolboys and the location is a school dormitory. Hori's almost painful attention to beauty and detailed physical descriptions, encompassing both a bee resting on a flower and a boy's fragile skin in the same appreciative gaze, is very different to Taruho's kaleidoscopic jumble of images, but it shares with Taruho a celebratory approach to boys' physical attraction. We also find the same mixture of awareness and innocence of sexual activity. The seventeen year-old narrator's position is described as both the admired and the admirer – there is a sexually charged scene in which a muscular older student, Uozumi, who is 'idolized' by the other younger boys, appears to be attracted to him, but the main focus of the story is on the narrator's desire for his classmate Saigusa:

He was just one year older than me. It was quite well known that the older students were keen on him [literally: 'saw him as a *shōnen*']. He was a boy with beautiful skin through which his veins showed. With my still rose-coloured cheeks, I was jealous of that anaemic beauty of his. In the classroom I often even stole a look at his slender neck from behind my textbooks. (Hori: 43)

The text suggestively implicates both Saigusa and Uozumi in sexual activity, while the narrator's role is left tantalizingly unclear. Saigusa has a habit of going up to the dormitory bedroom early and, when one night the narrator goes up earlier than usual, he finds Uozumi

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sitting on Saigusa's bed and apparently disturbed by the narrator's sudden appearance. The next night Saigusa is absent until late and gives an unconvincing account of where he has been. The narrator then informs us: 'The relationship between me and Saigusa seemed at some point to have gone beyond the bounds of friendship' (44). Uozumi is said to have become increasingly 'violent' (*ranbō*) towards the other boys and then mysteriously disappears. On a summer holiday together, Saigusa and the narrator are physically close to the extent that he notices the ridge of a tuberculosis scar on Saigusa's spine, which he is drawn to stroke, but emotionally a distance develops between them. Thereafter Saigusa sends 'something like love letters' to him but they do not meet again, as Saigusa's tuberculosis returns and he soon dies. Several years later, we are told, the narrator also developed tuberculosis and the story ends with him gazing at a boy of fifteen or sixteen sunbathing naked at the sanatorium, touched by the sight of a ridge on the boy's back that reminds him, with a jolt, of Saigusa.

A similar trajectory of (apparently) unconsummated desire followed by estrangement is seen in Kawabata Yasunari's novel *Shōnen* (*Youth*), which was published in 1948-49, but locates the narrative in the early years of the Taisho era. Although the narrator is named Miyamoto in the text, he is strongly identified with Kawabata, as a writer aged fifty at the time of publication, and mixes what we are told are excerpts from diaries and letters with unpublished fiction and much retrospective commentary by the narrator. The unpublished fiction is, we are told, the second half of a novel entitled *Yugashima de no omoide* (*Reminiscences at Yugashima*) written when the narrator was twenty-four, of which the first half was rewritten and published as (Kawabata's) *Izu no odoriko* (*The Izu Dancer*, 1926). 'The second half describes reminiscences

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of love for a boy with whom I shared a room in my middle school dormitory' (Kawabata 1969: 272). Perhaps because of the less restrictive publishing climate in 1948, Kawabata's novel deals, in some ways, more directly with the narrator's same-sex desire than either Taruho's stories or Hori's and discusses it in terms of sexuality – it talks not only of love and boys but conceptualizes his desire as homosexuality. He describes how some of his stories written around the age of seventeen mention a friend whom he visited often and the friend's brothers:

I was close to both the elder brother, who was in the year above me, and the younger brother, who was in the year below me, and this was in some ways like an affection for the opposite sex. The love of boys is generally like that. I was like the brothers' parents. Having become used to seeing them, if I did not see them I was ill at ease.

However, there was nothing homosexual (277)

This assertion that his feelings were not homosexual (*'dōseiai to iu yō na koto ha nakatta'*) is not a general denial, though. The very next line, which begins the next chapter, states: 'In my diary entries from 17 September 1916 to 22 January 1917 there are mentions of homosexuality (*dōseiai no kiji*). These diary entries describe how he got up early and got into the bed of Kiyono, a younger boy, and embraced and kissed him. The novel goes on to trace the history of his relationship with Kiyono.

Several characteristics of the narrator's homosexual desires emerge from the novel. Firstly, the purity of the narrator's feelings for Kiyono is a constant concern and a source of tension. He describes, in a letter to Kiyono, how, without wanting to go too far, he found every opportunity for physical contact, always sleeping next to him and holding his hand. He also describes his jealousy when another student, Ōguchi, tried to get Kiyono to have sex with him: 'He tried to perpetrate – please allow me to call it this – a squalid act' (279-80). This 'squalid

act' (*iyashii kōi*) attempted unsuccessfully by Ōguchi is contrasted with the innocence of his own relationship with Kiyono and he reflects with satisfaction that Kiyono seems to love him in the same way. However, this 'purity' is also questioned, as he wonders whether his own motives are really that pure. He speculates that he would be red-faced with embarrassment if his own 'daydreams' (*mōsō*) were realized: 'Have I ever been able to look on a pretty boy or girl without any carnal feelings? If only I had the opportunity, Takagi, or Fukunaga, or Nishikawa... what message were my eyes sending to my heart as I watched them? And how could I say that some darkness was not secreted in my heart for Kiyono, too?' (280)

Secondly, it is clear from the text that sexual activity does take place among the boys in the dormitory and that this takes the form of relations between older and younger boys, in which the narrator sees the older boys as assailants and the younger boys as victims, following much the same pattern as seen in Meiji era stories. As we would expect from his scruples about not 'going too far' with Kiyono, the narrator views this actual sexual activity negatively. He mentions how 'Kikugawa and Asada were the objects of the older boys' attention as the *bishōnen* of the dormitory' and refers to 'the older boys' ugly demands' (283). Opportunities also present themselves to the narrator, as he informs Kiyono: 'Unlike you, Kakiuchi was well acquainted with the older boys. He defiantly gave the impression that he would have let me do it as well, but I was too nervous' (284).

Thirdly, Kawabata concentrates on the femininity of the *bishōnen*'s attractiveness. After Kiyono has given up his studies and is devoting himself to the Ōmoto religion, the narrator visits him in Saga (their last meeting). A schoolfriend of Kiyono is also visiting and he points out

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Kiyono's youngest sibling, asking if he thinks it is a boy or a girl. He thinks it seems like a twelve or thirteen year-old girl, but the friend tussles with the child and exposes him to prove that he is a boy. Miyamoto says: 'I felt excited. In that younger brother I had found my roommate as he looked in his childhood' (307). He tells us that Kiyono was also very like a girl and sharing a room with him was like having a girl around. Kawabata appears to wish to explain the attraction of Kiyono in terms of gender ambivalence.

Lastly, the narrator's urge to explain his attraction to boys takes a psychoanalytical turn at some points. He speculates that the absence of women in his family as a child (since he was orphaned and brought up by his grandfather alone) may be to blame for the 'sexually sick' aspects of his character and the psychoanalytical concept of homosexuality as a common phase of development seems to lie behind his comment that he 'still felt more attracted to boys than girls' even when he was taking his university entrance exams, whereas there is no suggestion that the adult Miyamoto is still attracted to his own sex.

From Ōgai to Kawabata, then, the representation of same-sex desire among men seems intimately connected to the image of the schoolboy and often closely tied to the locus of the student dormitory. That image of the schoolboy changes from the very masculine one of Ōgai's *kōha* to the gender ambivalence of Taruho and Ranpo and the distinctly feminine appeal of Kawabata's *bishōnen*. A greater level of introspection on the nature of same-sex desire and the conflict between 'pure' emotion and the urge for physical consummation emerges with Hori Tatsuo and is further developed by Kawabata, with a clear awareness in Kawabata of psychological accounts of homosexuality.

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THE *DANSHŌ*

However, one very different paradigm for the literary representation of male-male sexuality needs to be mentioned, and that is the paradigm of prostitution. While Ranpo took up some aspects of the *ero-guro/ryōki* conceptualization of same-sex desire in his emphasis of the 'strange' or grotesque and associations with criminality, another aspect of its representation in *ryōki*-related texts (both in the early Showa era and in the post-war period) was the association with cross-dressing male prostitution. This was an aspect of urban strangeness described by Takeda Rintarō (1904-1946) in his short story 'Kamagasaki' (1933). The figure of the male prostitute presents the extreme of the association with gender ambivalence and Takeda foregrounds the ambivalence of the prostitute's gender in his text. At his first appearance (when the observing figure in the story, 'a novelist,' knows nothing about him), he is referred to as 'a woman.' The novelist, who, on a visit from Tokyo, is looking around the Osaka district of Kamagasaki hoping to locate his childhood home, is dragged indoors by the woman, into what turns out to be the very building the novelist was looking for. Realising the woman is a prostitute, the novelist agrees to pay her fee but declines to have sex and, during the conversation that ensues, he suspects from the sound of her voice that she is, in fact, a man. He asks her outright and she acknowledges the fact, saying that the novelist is the first person ever to have noticed, which leads her into a lament about getting too old (at the age of twenty) to pass as a woman (Takeda: 151-52). From this point on the text refers to the prostitute as '*kare (onna)*' (he [the woman]) and later it uses this designation interchangeably with '*josō no otoko*' ('the transvestite'). There is great attention to the masculinity/femininity of the prostitute, the

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narrative noting how he squares his shoulders and becomes less reserved once the novelist has found him out, but describing how he covers his mouth 'like a woman' when he laughs.

Takeda shares with Ranpo a concentration on the grotesque aspect of the sexuality that he represents in the prostitute and the scopophilic drive motivating the story cannot be denied, but Takeda's political commitment as a leftist writer imbues 'Kamagasaki' with a sense of sympathy for 'the transvestite'. The picture it paints of his life is deeply unaesthetic and, to that extent, quite unlike the approach of Hori or Kawabata. The reader is given every grimy detail of the prostitute's filthy room, with its soiled bedding, and his unkempt appearance, but the same attention to pitiful detail is found in Takeda's description of the bar to which the prostitute takes the novelist in the latter half of the story, and of the other customers there. The narrative reads almost as a piece of reportage, with the Osaka dialect of the prostitute carefully reproduced in the dialogue ('*Homma ni, erai summahen na*' is how he apologizes for accepting the novelist's money without having sex, 151) and various details of life in this slum area reported in the course of the story, along with the history of the prostitute's family that has led brought them to poverty. The foregrounding of gender ambivalence is not gratuitous, but also fits in with the investigative tone of the narrative, as the importance of 'passing' as a woman is highlighted, not least by the affecting story of the prostitute's younger brother (who plies the same trade) being arrested in a police raid and having his hair shaved, thus depriving him of the means to earn money until his hair grows back. The novelist, who spends the night with the family, notices how, even though the boy's head has been shaved, 'he still showed his usual graceful appearance, sleeping with the shoulder of his under-kimono showing' (167).

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Aside from discussions of male prostitutes in popular magazines including *Hanzai kagaku*, where they are sometimes referred to as 'new *kagama*' (see Pflugfelder: 318-26), a very unliterary novel published (and banned) in 1931 attests to the familiarity of the paradigm in very similar terms to Takeda's story. Nagareyama Ryūnosuke's *Ero-guro danshō nikki* (Erotic Grotesque Diary of a Male Prostitute) is a first-person narrative told by a twenty-two year-old man living as a woman and working in various locations in Asakusa and Ueno. Once again the ambivalence of his gender is foregrounded, with the narrator, Aiko, referring to himself as 'boku' in the text but using 'atashi' in the dialogue. Like Takeda's 'transvestite,' Aiko depends on his ability to pass as a woman in order to attract customers, but in this comparatively explicit text the deception only lasts until the customer reaches the bedroom. In one case, when he picks up three middle school boys, he comments that none of them noticed at any stage, but says this was either because it was their first time or because they were young and over-excited (Nagareyama 1931: 11-12). In other cases, his regular customers are perfectly aware of his gender, including the young man whose encounter with Aiko begins the novel and who, Aiko relates with evident satisfaction, did not suspect it until they reached the hotel but still subsequently came back for more. The trajectory of the narrative, in which Aiko experiences 'love at first sight' for the young businessman of the first chapter, is swept away in a fast car by a suave gentleman for a romantic visit to Kyoto, and is ultimately set up as a mistress by a wealthy older man, suggests that it is in large part designed to appeal to the fantasies of those who might themselves enjoy such adventures. Lacunae in the text make evident some form of censorship even before the novel was banned, but even with words

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missing it is clear what takes place between Aiko and his customers. With diamond rings, expensive clothes and a fashionable short haircut, he is a far more successful figure than Takeda's shabby 'transvestite.' The narrative sometimes has the feel of a journalistic exposé or confession, with a lengthy explanation of what led Aiko into sexual relationships with men and subsequently prostitution. Indeed, Aiko appears twice in the newspapers in the course of the novel, once in an interview to describe his lifestyle and once after an incident in Ueno park, which prompts the headline "'How about it, sir?' – Pervert dressed as *moga* solicits policeman' (62).

As this brief account suggests, *Ero-guro danshō nikki* is a rambunctious adventure aimed squarely at a popular market (as the text's liberal use of furigana makes clear), but both this novel and Takeda Rintarō's far more serious 'Kamagasaki' illustrate the existence of a paradigm for fictional representations of sexual desire between men other than that of the (chaste) schoolboy. The figure of the cross-dressing male prostitute underscores the increasing association of same-sex desire with gender ambivalence in the early Showa era.

CHANGING PERSPECTIVES

The above is far from an exhaustive survey of literary representations of same-sex desire in modern Japanese literature up to the start of Mishima's writing career, but it should at least discourage us from taking at face value Nakamura's assertion that 'almost nobody knows what *nanshoku* is' or Mishima's own claim to have written 'the first Japanese novel to deal with homosexuality since Saikaku', and it also provides a set of comparisons from which to approach

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Mishima's fiction on the subject, which occupied a significant place in his early output, from the short story 'Cigarette' to his novel *Forbidden Colours*. Taking the changes in paradigms for same-sex desire identified above, and its various associations – with masculinity, with schoolboys and subsequently with gender ambivalence – we can identify the textual elements making up Mishima's representations, rather than looking for their origins in the author himself. Mishima's use of these pre-existing textual elements could, in some instances, be discussed in terms of 'borrowing', but the main purpose is not to establish a set of borrowings to account for what is in Mishima's texts. Useful as this is as a counterweight to psychological accounts that draw heavily on the author's own experiences and character, the purpose is rather the more pragmatic task of setting Mishima's writing against the background of what had gone before, to produce some insight into the intertext of fictional writing on same-sex desire and so begin unpicking the strands from which Mishima's representations are woven. Genette's conception of the work of the critic is useful here, in the sense of returning the individual work to the literary system, by identifying elements in the text and re-establishing their relation to the system, which the author's work has obscured (see 'Structuralism and Literary Criticism' in Genette 1982). This in turn makes it possible to suggest some of the significances and readings that were possible at the time of the text's production.

The first and most obvious element linking Mishima to many of the works described above is the association of same-sex desire with schoolboys. His two early short stories, 'Cigarette' and 'Martyrdom', (*Junkyō*, 1948) as well as a large part of *Confessions of a Mask*, all relate experiences of desire among adolescent boys in the setting of what is recognisably Mishima's

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own school, *Gakushūin*. The first of these stories, 'Cigarette' has a clear resemblance to Hori Tatsuo's 'Les Joues En Feu' beyond this simple thematic one. Like Hori's story, it combines highly sensitive observations, in this case of the gardens in the grounds of the school, with an expression of the narrator's sexual attraction to other boys that is suggested by little more than hints. When older boys are trying to persuade him to join the sports club, he makes excuses 'while surreptitiously looking at their needlessly big arms' (MZ 16: 347). Rebuked by 'an older boy with the hooks on his jacket half undone', the narrator, Nagasaki, tells us: 'Still silent, I stared again at the older boys' big arms with their sleeves rolled up. Then my thoughts were led to a vague but ugly association with women.' The particular object of the narrator's desire is an older boy, Imura, who gives him his first cigarette. Imura is a member of the rugby club and appears to take a liking to Nagasaki, inviting him into the rugby club's room, where Nagasaki asks for another cigarette. While there is no hint of sexual activity on the part of Nagasaki, his smoking of the cigarettes given to him by Imura is described in very passionate and elegiac passages:

I drew on the cigarette. A smell like that of the marsh just now was mixed together with a fragrant smell of fire and for a moment I had the illusion of seeing a huge tropical tree on fire. [...]

Holding high the first cigarette I had ever smoked, with my eyes half closed, I stared for ages at the smoke drifting into the blue of the hazy afternoon sky. The smoke rose most elegantly. Hanging in the air, it hesitated, only barely perceptible. Just like a dream on the edge of wakefulness, as it began to form it dissolved into nothing...

Breaking into this drugged moment, I heard his warm and gentle voice asking right by my ear: 'What's your name?' (349-50)

The sense that Nagasaki's smoking of Imura's cigarette (about which he subsequently feels both ashamed and proud) is standing in for a more direct sexual contact between them is

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reinforced in the scene in the rugby club room, when, after gazing at Imura's arms and his sweaty legs in his rugby shorts, Nagasaki demands a cigarette, impressing the other older boys with his precociousness (357-58). Imura asks if he is sure he can manage it (*'Hontō ni sueru no ka?'*) and, when Nagasaki starts choking, tells him not to overdo it (*'Yose, yose, muri suru na yo'*). While there is nothing more overt or explicit, the text clearly suggests that Imura takes an erotic interest in the younger boys, as the other members of the rugby team appear to tease him when he invites Nagasaki to the team room: "'Hey, a *chigo*?' "Great!" "Just how many does that make, Imura?"' (355-56). Using the same term as Taruho's knowing schoolboys, the other boys again refer to Nagasaki as 'Imura's *chigo*' when they express their admiration at his request for a cigarette.

If the school setting, the casual familiarity of erotic friendships between older and younger boys and even the terminology all show a continuity from Ōgai through Taruho and Hori to Mishima, there is also a decisive shift in Mishima's stories, in the perspective of the desiring subject. In *Vita Sexualis* the narrator experiences the advances of older boys and observes the behaviour of his *kōha* friend Koga when he loses his control and goes after younger boys, but the assumption throughout is that the older partner is both the subject of desire and somehow an aggressor in any sexual encounter. Taruho's stories present a more complex picture, with the characters in 'A Shop That Sells Stars' joking about the possibility of making a younger boy into their *chigo* and the older S desiring the younger R-chan in 'The Story of R-chan and S,' but with desire portrayed from the perspective of the younger boy in 'Favourite.' In Hori's 'Les Joues En Feu' Saigusa is identified as being a year older than the narrator, but he is in the same

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year class and there is no emphasis on his age, while he is clearly marked as the younger, more fragile partner in his suggested relationship with the older, more muscular Uozumi. Again in Kawabata's *Youth*, the first person narrator's interest is in the younger and rather feminine Kiyono.

In 'Cigarette', by contrast, the perspective of the desiring subject has clearly shifted to the younger boy, with the characteristics of desirability no longer those of the *bishōnen*. The objects of Nagasaki's desire are the masculine older boys, characterized by their 'big arms' and their membership of sports clubs. Here we have the *chigo* represented not merely as the object of desire, at risk from the violent assaults of older boys, but as the subject of desire, looking on the more masculine and adult boys as sexually attractive. The characterization of Nagasaki as pale and fragile and uninterested in sport preserves the paradigm of the older boy as masculine and active and the younger boy as more feminine and passive, but the 'passive' younger boy is actively interested in the physical attraction of the older. There is a clear continuity between Nagasaki, the narrator of 'Cigarette', and Kōchan, the narrator of *Confessions of a Mask*, whose desire for the older Ōmi more fully develops Nagasaki's desire for Imura.

The shift in perspective is illustrated by two similar scenes in Taruho's 'The Story of R-chan and S' and *Confessions of a Mask*. In Taruho's story, the older boy S enjoys watching the younger T's gym lessons from his classroom window:

He could see a number of white tee shirts parading across the centre of the sunlit grounds. T was a little more than halfway from the front of the line. S's heart began to race. He stared at T's arms as they swung back and forth from his small, round shoulders. He watched the movements of his legs, which were wrapped in heavy kneepads. When T took off his jacket, S was seized by an unbearable desire to reach out and touch the long curving line that ran the length of the boy's back from the top

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of his delicate shoulders to his waist. (Taruho 2008: 366)

In *Confessions of a Mask* Kōchan declares that he fell in love with Ōmi, described as several years older, when he found him drawing the letters of his name in the snow and from then on looked forward to summer bringing an opportunity to see Ōmi's body more clearly. That opportunity comes in a gym class, when Ōmi is called upon to perform on the horizontal bar:

When I saw him, my chest started to pound. He had taken off his shirt as well and was in just a white, sleeveless running vest. The light tan of his skin showed off the white of his vest with a lurid cleanliness. It was a whiteness that seemed to gleam far into the distance. The outline of his sharply defined chest and his two nipples stood in relief in this alabaster. [...]

His biceps bulged firmly and as the flesh of his shoulders rose up like summer clouds the thickets in his armpits were furled into dark shadow and disappeared and, rubbing against the iron bar on high, his chest faintly trembled. (MZ 1: 230-31)

The site of the erotic spectacle is the same, but the markers of desirability have changed, from the slender young T's small, round and delicate shoulders to Ōmi's bulging biceps and muscular chest. They have changed from the characteristics of boyhood to those of adulthood, as Kōchan's particular focus on Ōmi's hairy armpits (elaborated at some length in the section omitted above) makes clear.

Taruho offered suggestions of the desire of the *bishōnen* in 'Favourite' but Mishima unequivocally shifted the narrative's erotic gaze to focus on the masculine body of the (almost) adult male. In this it might be tempting to see just a difference of taste on the part of the authors, but we can also discern the effect of wider discursive changes and a connection to another of our literary paradigms for same-sex desire: the gender-ambivalent cross-dressing prostitute. Mark McLelland's study of queer cultures in postwar Japan describes how 'the most visible homosexual category to appear immediately after the war was the *danshō*, or

cross-dressing male prostitute' (McLelland 2005: 73). The *danshō*, already seen in the stories by Takeda and Nagareyama, was a category that gained public familiarity from journalistic attention, not least when police harassment led to a riot by *danshō* in Ueno Park in November 1947.² McLelland describes how postwar writers used taxonomies of the perverse imported to, and developed in, Japan in the Taisho era, identifying *danshō* with the category of the 'Urning' (the German sexological term previously used by Ōgai), who were thought to be inclined to femininity, narcissism and passive anal sex. 'Urning were therefore quite distinct from the adult males who had taken on the "active" role in the previous *nanshoku* code. Their ideal sexual partners were not young *chigo* or slim, androgynous youths but "sportsmen, muscled labourers, soldiers and such like"' (75, quoting from a 1954 article in *Fūzoku zōshi*). The narrator of *Confessions of a Mask* indeed declares that his attraction to Ōmi has formed his sexual tastes so that he does 'not seek to love intellectual types' and is 'not attracted to men who wear glasses' (MZ 1: 221) but names those to whom he is attracted as 'toughs, sailors, soldiers, fishermen' (222). Kōchan does describe his attention shifting as he grew advanced through school from only older youths ('*toshiue no seinen*') to include younger boys ('*toshishita no shōnen*', 264-65). He then refers to Magnus Hirschfeld's division of inverts into 'androphils' who desire adult men and 'ephebophils' who were attracted to those between boyhood and adulthood, saying that he

² The *danshō* was by no means the only category visible at this time, either for sex between men or for male prostitution, nor was *danshō* the only designation. An article in the October, 1947 edition of *Hanzai yomimono* (Crime Stories) interviews representatives of two types of male prostitute: the *okame* and the *kakusaku bōi* ('*Hentai chōsho*' 1947). The *okame* (so called because the *okama* have decided that the word 'okama' is vulgar and now prefer to call themselves 'okame') is cross-dressed and has lived as a woman from childhood. On the other hand, the *kakusaku bōi* (the etymology of the phrase is unconvincingly explained as 'from a South Seas language') is a sixteen year-old street urchin who just found it was a good way to make money. Among the *okame*, the *kakusaku bōi* and their respective clients, it is clearly only the *okame* who is sexually attracted to adult men.

was 'acquiring an understanding of ephobophils' (265), before going on to describe his infatuation with the typically *bishōnen* Yakumo, aged eighteen. However the young man who catches his eye in the final scene of the novel, at a dance hall with Sonoko, is described as dark and muscled, a rough type rather than a *bishōnen*. Mishima, therefore, seems to be representing the desire of the 'Urning' or *danshō* as it was conceived of in late 1940s Japan played out against the backdrop of earlier literary accounts of same-sex desire among schoolboys. For readers familiar with the paradigm for describing the love of schoolboys, the objects of Kōchan's desire would perhaps have been surprising, for even in Kawabata's *Youth*, published the year before *Confessions of a Mask*, the attractions of Kiyono in no way suggest those of the toughs to whom Kōchan is drawn.

The portrayal of Kōchan's desire in *Confessions of a Mask* is, in some ways, unusually explicit. Watching Ōmi on the horizontal bar, he worries that his classmates might notice that the sight of the older boy has given him an erection and we see him masturbating at the seaside as he compares his own armpits with Ōmi's. However what is notably absent from the *Confessions* is any acknowledgment of sexual activity. Ōmi first comes to Kōchan's attention because he has been expelled from the dormitory for some unexplained 'violent behaviour' (*ranbō na furumai*, 209), which recalls Uozumi's increasingly 'violent' behaviour before his sudden disappearance from the dormitory in Hori's 'Les Joues En Feu'. In the context of dormitory life, it seems likely that this is intended to suggest some kind of sexual aggression against the younger boys. The nearest Kōchan himself comes to a sexual encounter is the game of 'dirty' (*gesu-gokko*), in which boys lunge at each other's genitals in the playground (211). Other than this, though, life

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at Kōchan's school seems suspiciously chaste, given the picture painted in other fiction, from Ōgai to Kawabata. Indeed, even Mishima's two short stories, 'Cigarette' and 'Martyrdom' hint more strongly at actual sexual encounters than does *Confessions of a Mask*. In 'Cigarette' the teasing of Imura over the number of his *chigo* suggests that he takes more than a theoretical interest in the younger boys and 'Martyrdom' suggests a sexual relationship more explicitly, although it mixes sexual desire with shocking violence, which places it to this extent between 'Cigarette' and *Confessions of a Mask*. The central episode of 'Martyrdom' centres on what passes between Hatakeyama, the terror of the dormitory, and a younger boy, Watari. Hatakeyama possesses a copy of an unnamed book which exerts considerable power over his adolescent schoolmates (it would appear to be some kind of sex manual) and which he selectively lends out to the other boys. When the book is discovered to have been stolen, suspicion falls on Watari and Hatakeyama repossesses it in a violent attack. Watari subsequently creeps into Hatakeyama's room at night and appears to try to strangle him in his sleep, but when he throws Watari off it is not clear whether Watari's eyes are full of enmity or infatuation (*akogare*). What ensues is a violent attack by Hatakeyama that has clear sexual overtones and suggests that a sexual encounter follows:

Watari was thrown face down on the floor; then for a full twenty minutes he continued to endure the violence of Hatakeyama, who sat astride him as if riding a horse. Saying that he would make him feel embarrassed when he was in the bath, Hatakeyama sprinkled blue-black ink on his exposed buttocks and poked them with the needle of a pair of compasses to see how he would react. [...]

In this dormitory, where one room was assigned to two boys, Hatakeyama's roommate happened to have gone home ill, so if he took care for the sound not to reach the room below Hatakeyama could do whatever he wanted. After a while they both tired. At some point they both dozed off where they had fallen on the floor. In Watari's case forgetting even to cover up his pale white buttocks. [...]

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Suddenly a strange desire awoke in Hatakeyama. It was not so much a break with this tranquil feeling as a natural progression from it. [...]

Hatakeyama rolled over twice. As a result he had gone a bit too far and was now half lying on top of Watari. Then Watari let out something he had not heard before, a cute little snigger like the cry of a shellfish. Seeking out that laughter, the demon king made a movement that pressed his whole face against Watari's lips, all around which down was growing.

Their classmates began to whisper the rumour that Hatakeyama and Watari were up to no good. (MZ 17: 43-44)

The sexual tension between the two boys (the text leaves it open whether the rumour that there is something questionable – *ayashii* – between them implies any more than this) ultimately resolves into further violence, with Hatakeyama and his gang hanging Watari from a tree, only to find that his body is gone when they return.

In Mishima's two short stories, and in *Confessions of a Mask*, we find a pattern familiar from earlier representations: a recognition of sexual desire and a simultaneous disavowal. Indeed, it seems that the more directly the desire is represented, the greater the effort to distance the desiring subject from sexual activity. In this respect, the texts discussed above may be divided into two sets: those in which sexual desire is realised in sex between men and those in which it is unrealised or unrequited. The former would include *Vita Sexualis* (and other accounts of the Meiji period), Ranpo's stories and the stories of prostitution by Takeda Rintarō and Nagareyama Ryūnosuke. In all of these, except Nagareyama's banned novel, the disavowal of desire is enacted by a distancing from the desiring subject, as Ōgai's narrator steadfastly attributes sexual desire to others, while Ranpo's scopophilic attention to the grotesque strangeness of his subject matter and Takeda's concerned reportage avoid implicating the narrator. The second group would include Taruho's stories, Kawabata's *Youth* and probably

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Hori's 'Les Joues En Feu', in all of which desire is clearly on display and experienced directly by the protagonist, but in which its consummation is avoided, either explicitly and consciously as in *Youth* or implicitly as in Taruho's 'Favourite'.

In *Confessions of a Mask* the narrator's sexual desire for men goes unrealised. However, what distinguishes Kōchan from Tari in Taruho's 'Favourite' is a lack of innocence. Even while sex between boys and desire for boys (including others' desire for him) is present all around Tari, and made more or less apparent to the reader, Tari himself never really recognizes what is going on. By contrast, Kōchan is acutely aware of, and troubled by, his own desire for boys. However, while Tari's apparent naivety is nevertheless very social, placing him in a network of same-sex desire, Kōchan's awareness is isolating. There is never a hint that his desire for Ōmi, or for Yakumo, could be realised, or that any companionship is possible with other boys who share his desire. By contrast, Tari's school life seems to be a vortex of suggestiveness and sexual opportunity, and even Kawabata's narrator, who rejects the idea of sex as rendering his love less 'pure', is aware that there are boys who would 'let him' if he wanted to. While sexual activity in the stories by Taruho, Hori and Kawabata always seems to take place just offstage, in *Confessions of a Mask* it seems completely absent.

Such is far from the case in Mishima's later treatment of same-sex desire in *Forbidden Colours*. Here, sexual desire is realised and what sets *Forbidden Colours* apart from earlier works in this first of the categories described above, whether *Vita Sexualis* or 'Kamagasaki,' is that the desire of the protagonist is consummated. In this sense, the only precedent for Yūichi, the young protagonist, is the *danshō* of Nagareyama Ryūnosuke's *Erotic Grotesque Diary of a Male*

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Prostitute. A number of aspects do, indeed, link the novel to Nagareyama's and Takeda's stories of prostitutes and to the contemporary conception of *danshō*. The context in which Yūichi is enabled to consummate his desire is largely centred on the bar *Rudon*, and the society there is one where same-sex desire is defined in terms of prostitution. Rudy, the proprietor, 'divided the customers into two sorts: the magnetic customers who were young and attractive and whose presence was an aid to prosperity, and the magnetically attracted customers who were generous and wealthy and spent money freely in the bar' (MZ 3: 119). Rudy's division assumes that well-off patrons will pay the younger and better looking for sex and he treats the young customers as if they were waitresses or hostesses, calling out '*o-zashiki da yo*' when one of the older customers requests their presence (123). Other men at *Rudon* assume that Yūichi, too, can be bought – which, in a sense, he has been in his arrangement with Shunsuke, as Shunsuke recognizes: 'He put together the five hundred thousand yen he had given the young man and the young man's pliability in relation to it. He was fearful of the fact that, while this financial relationship existed, it would be only too possible that Yūichi might be unable to refuse Shunsuke his body' (MZ 3: 322). The younger customers also share with *danshō* the characteristic of gender ambivalence, often displaying an effeminacy which Yūichi finds unattractive and which is one of the factors which make it difficult for him to identify with this society. So in *Forbidden Colours*, as in *Confessions of a Mask*, there is an acute consciousness on the part of the protagonist of his own desire, but in the later novel that desire is consummated. Any naivety on Yūichi's part is progressively overcome in the course of the narrative. There is no lack of possibilities for society or for sharing his desire with others, but as in *Confessions of a*

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Mask there is a sense of isolation, with the drama of Yūichi's situation following from his struggle to fit in to 'gay' Tokyo society.

So in both *Confessions of a Mask* and *Forbidden Colours* we find a continuation of the pattern of recognition and disavowal of desire exhibited in earlier narratives of same-sex desire, and in both of these novels the disavowal is enacted through a sense of isolation. The experience of sexual desire as isolating is something that is repeated frequently in other of Mishima's stories, which do not specifically address same-sex desire. We do not often find requited love in a conventional relationship, or a mutual discovery of, or struggle for, desire - with the notable exception of *The Sound of Waves* (*Shiosai*, 1954) and of *Too Long the Spring* (*Nagasugita haru*, 1956), in which the narrative follows a young couple overcoming the threat that postponement poses to their marriage. Desire is largely experienced by Mishima's characters as problematic *in itself* and as a cause of isolation. Conventional or existing relationships are generally experienced as defeat. Such is Etsuko's experience of her existing relationship with her father-in-law in *Thirst for Love*, by contrast with her problematic desire for the gardener, Saburō. Even in a much later work like *Spring Snow*, Kiyoaki is isolated in his desire, unable to respond to Satoko at the appropriate time and later threatened by a conventional relationship in the form of her betrothal. Isolation clearly underlies the experience of desire in *Kyōko's House*, where it is emphasized by the characters' revolving independently at a distance around Kyōko; Seiichirō, though married, is an isolated observer of sex and desire, while Kyōko's own final isolation, and the failure of her 'house' is represented by her being forced back into her own marriage at the end of the novel. The most successful in realising his desire is Osamu, in his

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sadomasochistic relationship, which leads to death. While this sense of all desire as isolating is easily interpreted in terms of Mishima's own imputed nihilism, the pattern established in his early fiction suggests, then, that it follows also from the disavowal of desire found in pre-existing representations of specifically same-sex desire.

THE RETURN TO BOYHOOD

In one other respect, too, paradigms for same-sex desire can be seen to pattern the narrative of stories not directly related to the subject. Matsumoto Tōru observes how Mishima's description of Kiyoaki in *Spring Snow* goes back to the boy protagonists of his early works: 'At the point where they begin to step from childhood into young adults, boys develop a fearfully acute pride and sensitivity. Before starting work on his tetralogy *The Sea of Fertility*, Mishima had begun to discuss his ideas of a return to boyhood (*shōnenki e no kaiki*) ... and Kiyoaki is placed at the very end of that boyhood. He shares this feature with the protagonists of the short stories 'Cigarette' and 'Martyrdom,' which were Mishima's first works' (Matsumoto 2005: 16). Indeed, the structure of *The Sea of Fertility*, with Kiyoaki's repeated reincarnation, requires each successive counterpart to the increasingly aged Honda to re-embody Kiyoaki as a youth in late adolescence. Sexological and psychological accounts of same-sex desire frequently identified it as a temporary phase associated with adolescence and this conception of homosexuality as a stopover on the road to heterosexuality is implicitly acknowledged in Kawabata's account of it in *Youth*. However, *Confessions of a Mask* denies the inevitability of this progression by showing heterosexual desire to have failed and returning the narrator's gaze to the body of a young man

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in the last scene of the novel. (See Chapter Two for a fuller discussion.) In the structure of *The Sea of Fertility*, Mishima again overcomes the inevitability of a progression out of desire for the adolescent male by bringing the reincarnated Kiyooki back to the form of the desirable youth. Matsumoto's reference to '*shōnenki he no kaiki*' (return to boyhood) should perhaps be rephrased as '*bishōnen he no kaiki*' (return to the beautiful youth).

Isao, the reincarnation of Kiyooki in *Runaway Horses* (Honba, 1967), is clearly recognisable as the sort of boy who would be attractive to Kōchan in *Confessions of a Mask* – handsome, masculine, strong and dark. To this is added the selfless purity of purpose eroticized by Mishima elsewhere in his later fiction, most notably in the short story 'Patriotism' (Yūkoku, 1961), whose protagonist chooses the same end as Isao. However, the description of Isao as beautiful, pure and valiant links him also to figures such as the brave young Kotarō in Rohan's *The Bearded Samurai*. Honda's first view of him, at a kendo tournament, has him playing a role directly from the Japanese past to which other representations of same-sex desire have turned. Honda's recognition of the reincarnation is only made possible by the sight of Isao's naked body at the Sankō waterfall in a scene which makes Honda the observer of the beautiful youth:

Three youths were side by side under the waterfall, the water scattered by their shoulders and heads. The whipping sound of the water striking their young resilient skin mingled with the sound of the waterfall and as he approached, the flesh of their shoulders, beaten red, showed glistening under the spray. (MZ 13: 437)

Honda notices the moles that identify Isao as Kiyooki when Isao raises his arms, exposing his armpits, in a scene that recalls the erotic images of both Ōmi and St. Sebastian from *Confessions of a Mask*. At this point, 'Honda, trembling, gazed at the youth's manly smiling face in the water. Under his brows, which were frowning to keep out the water, his constantly fluttering eyes

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were looking this way' (438).

The reincarnation in the third novel of the tetralogy, *The Temple of Dawn*, is, in fact, a woman, Ying Chan, but here the girl is observed to be in a sexual relationship with another woman and the fact that Honda observes the defining moles by spying on Ying Chan in bed with the woman only serves to confirm the erotic charge of the scene with Isao. The final reincarnation in *The Decay of the Angel* (*Tennin gosui*, 1970) is again in the body of a beautiful adolescent boy and in this case the boy, Tōru, signifies the end of the cycle in his reflexive attention to his own beauty and in the undermining of Kiyoaki's and Isao's purity. This is Mishima's last *bishōnen*:

When he tired of looking at the sea, he took a small hand mirror from the drawer in his desk and gazed at his own face. On his pale face with its sharply outlined nose were beautiful eyes forever brimming with night. His eyebrows were thin but arched and his lips were gentle yet firm. Nevertheless most beautiful were his eyes. Even though eyes should not be necessary for self awareness. It was an irony that his eyes were the most beautiful part of his body. That the organs for establishing precisely his own beauty were the most beautiful.

His eyebrows were long and his exceedingly cruel eyes appeared at first sight to be constantly dreaming.

In any case, Tōru was a chosen one, absolutely unlike others, and this orphan was confident of his own purity, which was capable of any evil. (MZ 14: 377-78)

THE RETURN TO MASCULINITY

As noted above, many of the young customers at *Rudon* in *Forbidden Colours* share the gender ambivalent effeminacy of the *danshō*, although they are by no means cross-dressed. However, in the two novels and two short stories discussed earlier, the paradigm of gender ambivalence is clearly rejected in favour of the earlier association of same-sex desire with masculinity. In the early short stories, *Cigarette* and *Martyrdom*, this is seen in the younger boy's desire for the

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rougher, masculine older boy. This taste is shared by Kōchan in *Confessions of a Mask*, as is made clear by the descriptions of Ōmi and of the young tough at the end of the novel, as well as the figures on whom he focused as a child: the nightsoil man and the carriers of the shrine who come rushing into the family's garden. The association with gender ambivalence is recognized in his dressing up as the female magician Tenkatsu and as Cleopatra, but there is no suggestion that this endures beyond childhood and the older Kōchan's desire is focused solely on the attributes of masculinity.

The rejection of femininity is most clearly enacted in *Forbidden Colours*, where Yūichi begins from a conception of his desire as rendered impossible by the effect of gender. Struck by the beauty of a younger boy, he also recognizes that the boy loves him, but, in distress, concludes that he cannot love the boy:

If I, who wish desperately to love only women even though I absolutely cannot love women, were to love him, would he, though a man, not change into a woman, into something unspeakably ugly and insensible? Would not love turn my partner into what I do not want to love? (MZ 3: 43)

In his first encounter with men cruising in Hibiya Park, Yūichi is horrified to find that some of them are wearing makeup and as he becomes more familiar with the world of *Rudon* he is increasingly sickened by signs of effeminacy:

Some enormous female shadow was cast over this world of men only. All feared this shadow of an invisible woman, and some challenged the shadow, while others viewed it with resignation, others resisted before finally being defeated and fawned upon it from the start. Yūichi believed that he was an exception. Then he prayed that he was an exception. Then he strove to be an exception. (133-34)

On several subsequent occasions, Yūichi reacts with horror to the sight of men using cosmetics. What Yūichi and Mishima's other male-desiring protagonists seek is a purely masculine world and in this sense they look back to the worlds described by Rohan and Ōgai, before the

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same-sex desire became associated with femininity. Here Mishima marks a break with Taruho and Ranpo, in whose fiction same-sex desire is figured as an aspect of modernity, but shows continuity with Ōgai's *kōha*, for whom tales of the Edo period held an erotic appeal.

The resonance of masculinity in Mishima's fiction throughout his career scarcely needs comment, nor the frequency with which this was figured in terms of material markers of the Japanese past. The same is true of his public persona – one need only think of the photographs of Mishima with sword and *fundoshi* produced in the 1960s. However, here again Mishima's elaboration of a way to represent same-sex desire using existing paradigms can be seen to have affected his fiction more widely. There is an obvious continuity between the masculine, non-intellectual boys desired by Kōchan and the gardener, Saburō, to whom Etsuko is drawn in *Thirst for Love*. Indeed, Etsuko's most genuine experience of desire seems to be when she is thrust against Saburō at the shrine festival, in a scene which recalls Kōchan's memory of the portable shrine being carried into his garden. The types identified by Kōchan – 'toughs, sailors, soldiers, fishermen' – reappear throughout Mishima's work. Even in a later work like *The Sailor Who Fell From Grace With the Sea*, the sailor Ryūji is identifiable as such a type, and the young Noboru becomes obsessed with the contamination of Ryūji's masculinity by his contact with Noboru's mother.

REFIGURING DESIRE

In other respects, too, Mishima's stories of same-sex desire exhibit continuity. In particular, the attention paid to sexological and psychological explanations of sexuality in *Confessions of a*

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Mask and the significance of Freudian conceptions of desire in *Forbidden Colours* (discussed in Chapter Two) mirror Ranpo's interest in psychoanalysis and the urge to 'explain' desire found in Kawabata's *Youth* and even in *Erotic Grotesque Diary of a Male Prostitute*. However, in at least two respects Mishima figures desire in ways not previously seen.

Firstly, same-sex desire is figured as a secret. To a non-Japanese reader in the present day, familiar with Western and late twentieth-century representations of homosexuality, this may seem unremarkable, but secrecy does not characterize earlier Japanese fictional representations. Certainly in Ōgai's intensely normative picture of sexual behaviour, Kanai's *kōha* friends appear to be conflicted over the expression of their desire, but it is spoken of quite openly and, as discussed above, in no way occasions surprise. So, too, among Taruho's schoolboys the significance of the designation of a boy as a *chigo* is known by all and even the vaguely unaware Tari in *Favourite* is surrounded by more or less overt references to sex. The picture given of school life by all the writers discussed is generally one where sexual activity among students of the same sex is an accepted fact. The gender identity of *danshō* is at least partly concealed as they pass for women, but the narrative of both stories discussed above follows the revelation of their male gender, not around any disquiet they experience over maintaining their secret or around the secret of their sexuality. (What is secret for them is not that they desire men, but that they *are* men.)

In 'Cigarette' we find the familiar open acknowledgement among the other students that the older boy, Imura, has a number of *chigo*, but the narrator's own desire is nevertheless a matter of secrecy. His sexual desire for Imura, represented by his first cigarette, is something he is

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afraid of giving away, convinced that he will not be able to wash off the evidence of his guilty secret and that others will detect its smell on him. In *Confessions of a Mask* the narrator never discusses his desire with others or acknowledges it externally. In the only discussion of desire with his school friends, he is proud of his ability to dissimulate successfully by describing the attractions of a bus conductress, an act of imagination which conceals his true desire.

In *Forbidden Colours* the narrative structures Yūichi's desire, and others', as a secret. So Count Kaburagi keeps his numerous affairs with boys from his wife, as is hinted from his first introduction: 'Mrs. Kaburagi looked at her husband at her side. The husband who had not once shared her bed in ten years. Nobody knew what he did. Even his wife did not dare to know' (MZ 3: 96). Yūichi's behaviour, too, is kept from his family and both the revelation of Kaburagi's relationship with Yūichi to his wife (when she finds them together) and the revelation of Yūichi's secret life to his family are major dynamics of the narrative. It is very clearly the fact that Yūichi is attracted to his own sex that is the ultimate secret, as he is prepared to go along with Mrs. Kaburagi's fabrication of an affair between them in order to conceal the truth. It is, therefore, not sexual activity outside his marriage that must be kept hidden but the nature of his desire.

Secondly, Mishima moves the representation of same-sex desire from *type* to *identity*. Earlier fiction, up to and including Kawabata's *Youth*, published only a year before *Confessions of a Mask*, deals in types: the *kōha*, the *bishōnen*, the older and younger schoolboy, the *danshō*. All of these types are recognizable and, indeed, all continue to have resonance in Mishima's fiction. However, the types are only that – they are roles which may be assumed, as in the case of the

danshō, or styles, as the *kōha*, or temporary relations, as between the younger and older schoolboy. By contrast, identity is defining. Kōchan's references to sexology and psychology are different to those of Kawabata's narrator, in that he seeks in them an explanation of *what he is*, not just why a particular boy attracts him. This is the effect of the internalizing of the representation of desire in *Confessions of a Mask*. Striking as it is (by comparison with other texts) that there is no overt sexual activity between men in the novel, the portrayal of Kōchan as desiring men in no way lacks directness. It is not what he *does* that matters, but what he *is*. Here and in *Forbidden Colours* same-sex desire moves from the adjectival/verbal to the nominal. It is telling that whereas Ōgai's narrator, Kanai, refers (in the negative) to 'Urning-taru *soshitsu*' (Urning-ness), Mishima's in *Confessions of a Mask* refers simply to Urnings. Although Ranpo's texts refer to *henshitsu* ('perverts'), they do so in the third person, whereas Kōchan's drama follows his increasingly certain definition of *himself* as a *tōsakusha* ('invert').

The elaboration of an identity is further developed in *Forbidden Colours* with the conceptualization of the *nanshoku-ka* (on which see Chapter Six of this study). Yūichi is hard to categorize in terms of existing types: he is still a student, but older than the adolescent schoolboys previously seen and, crucially, married. Although others in the novel share some characteristics with the cross-dressing *danshō* they are not classifiable as such, and to the extent that their relationships are characterized as prostitution, we are given, in the person of Count Kaburagi, a detailed picture of the buyer, which is lacking elsewhere. Yūichi displays mutability in terms of type and role, being the younger *bishōnen* in his relationship with Kaburagi but the older partner in most of his sexual adventures. He is not only hard to

categorize, but manifestly uncomfortable with the models of behaviour on offer. It is precisely this discomfort that is often interpreted as misery and as giving *Forbidden Colours* an atmosphere of darkness. However, Yūichi's discomfort marks a step in sensibility and a move towards identity rather than type.

In his confrontation with identity and his rejection of established features of the representation of same-sex desire, Mishima stands out from Fukunaga Takehiko, whose *Grass Flowers* (*Kusa no hana*, 1954) was published after both *Confessions of a Mask* and *Forbidden Colours*. In Fukunaga's novel, the first person narrator is left two notebooks by Shiomi, his fellow patient in a tuberculosis sanatorium who has died. In the first notebook Shiomi describes his love at the age of eighteen for Fujiki, a seventeen year-old student in the year below him at high school, while the second notebook focuses on his later love for Fujiki's sister, Chieko. The overall narrative thus enacts the transition from homosexual to heterosexual desire found in Kawabata but conspicuously absent in Mishima. It replays the division between the two halves of *Confessions of a Mask*, with the attraction to the boy in the first half and the girl in the second, but there is no suggestion that the transition might 'fail,' as it does in Mishima's novel. Fukunaga's novel most recalls the tone of Hori's 'Les Joues En Feu' and with a very similar ending to the boys' relationship, in that after an emotional estrangement the beloved Fujiki dies. As in Kawabata's *Youth*, Shiomi is at pains to emphasise the spiritual nature of his love and since he speaks interchangeably of 'true love (*hontō no ai*)' and 'true friendship' (*hontō no yūjō*) it seems it is this intensely spiritual love rather than physical desire that he is describing when he says to a friend: 'I think this is true love, a love that will certainly never be

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repeated' (Fukunaga 1956: 104).

Against the background of Fukunaga's later treatment of same-sex desire, which fits so well with the genre of schoolboy love established in Hori's and Kawabata's earlier stories, Mishima's protagonists stand out all the more clearly. Whether they describe themselves as *tōsakusha* or *nanshokuka*, Kōchan and Yūichi are involved in a struggle to come to terms not just with an emotional or physical experience but with a sexual identity. Although Nakamura Mitsuo's claim to have no basis for comparison is easily shown to be misleading, he was right to suggest that Mishima had presented his readers with something new.

Two

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CONFESSING/CONSTRUCTING THE TRUTH

Many of Mishima's fictional works engage dramatically with the consequences of sexual desire and episodes in which a character discovers either a sexual scene involving others or the true nature of their own sexual desire play pivotal roles in many of his narratives: from the consequences of Etsuko's repressed passion in *Thirst for Love* through Osamu's discovery of sexual fulfillment in masochistic suffering in *Kyōko's House* to Noboru's spying on his mother having sex in *The Sailor Who Fell From Grace With the Sea* and Honda's peeping at Ying Chan in bed with Keiko in *The Temple of Dawn*. In all of these a sense of shock is engendered (in either the reader or the fictional observer or both) at the discovery of the truth. *Confessions of a Mask* is probably the work in which Mishima most directly engages with the experience of this discovery of the truth of desire and certainly the most explicit in its elaboration of sexual fantasy. It is worth, then, giving some attention to exactly how sexual desire is articulated in the novel.

Critical attempts to situate *Confessions of a Mask* have made much of the significance of the 'mask' and the nature of the 'confession' – is it sincere, in the line of the I-novel (*shishōsetsu*) or

is it the fictional confession of an invented persona? (See Wolfe 1989: 51, Keene 1984: 1183, and Sugimoto 1991.) Another way to situate the novel, though, is in terms of an ongoing discursive enterprise to reveal, or produce, the 'truth about sex' in fictional, professional and journalistic output throughout the first half of the twentieth century. Sabine Frühstück has shown how this drive to 'discover' and publish the truth varied from the late-Meiji attempt 'to shed oppressive traditional beliefs and to unburden sex of mystification' (Frühstück 2003: 5) to the colonial period's need to monitor and protect the national body (especially the bodies of its armed forces) and to a post-war attempt to liberate sexuality from the militarist and fascist regulations of the wartime regime. This variable enterprise can be seen to have encompassed both Mori Ōgai's *Vita Sexualis*, to which *Confessions of a Mask* bears a clear affinity and to which the dust-jacket of the first edition compared it, and the sensational confessional stories to be found in magazines of the 1920s and 1930s with titles such as 'My Confession: I became the slave of a lady-killer' (Frühstück: 114). The latter genre, of sensational stories in popular magazines, had returned to prominence at the time of *Confessions of a Mask's* publication. Although journals dealing largely with sexual matters gradually ceased publication as the intensity of the war increased from the late 1930s, the period of postwar Occupation saw a revival in the form of what were known as *kasutori zasshi*. These mixed the ostensibly scientific with the titillating, but both in the name of revealing or discovering the truth, for which the confessional was an appropriate mode. The first edition of the magazine *All Night* (*Ōrunaito*), published in June 1948 contained the short story 'The Confessions of Widow R' (*R-mibōjin no kokuhaku*) and the July 1946 edition of *Hope* (*Kibō*) included 'Confessions of a

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Woman of the Night' (*Yoru no onna no kokuhaku* Yamamoto 1976: 191) while the same month's edition of *True Story Magazine* (*Jitsuwa zasshi*) contained 'A Confession Diary of Youth: Love Amid the Flames of War' (*Seishun kokuhaku nikki: senka no naka no koi*, Teshigawara 1946).

The way that this titillating focus on sexual confession could be supported by the rhetoric of science and truth is demonstrated by the editorial in the first edition of the *kasutori* magazine *Sexual Culture* (*Sei bunka*) from February 1947:

The problem of sex is one that has been left on the far side of ignorance and darkness. In order to support the liberation of mankind, we must liberate the problem of sex and view it as a scientific and social question. It is only by throwing light onto this darkness that we can escape from bigoted introversion and tradition that thought of sex as obscene and only dealt with sex in terms of the erotic and grotesque [*ero-guro*], and can take a step towards a bright, new generous culture. (Yamamoto: appendix 13)

Two distinct models of sexuality can be traced in *Confessions of a Mask* and these reflect two specific discourses of sexuality that were current in the period covered by the narrative of the novel and at the time of its composition, and that gave form to the articulation of 'the truth about sex.' These models are not consistently deployed by the narrator; any more than they were consistently deployed in opposition to each other elsewhere, but the narrator does make clear reference to their specific characteristics. They can be described as the medical model and the psychiatric model. The medical model of sexuality is that which grew out of late nineteenth-century attempts by European doctors and others to create a taxonomy of sexual types, pathologizing homosexuality, bisexuality and other 'perverse' desires by contrast with 'normal' and healthy heterosexuality. Prominent among such attempts was Richard von

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Krafft-Ebing's (1840-1902) *Psychopathia Sexualis* (1886), which sought to define the various manifestations of abnormal sexuality, seeing these as analogous to mental and physical disorders. It was on the basis of this model that sexologists such as Magnus Hirschfeld (1868-1935) sought to define sexual types in order to argue for the decriminalization of homosexual activity in European countries, constructing the figure of the homosexual as sexually different but part of the natural order rather than a medical disorder. This sexological discourse in particular constructed the concept of the 'congenital invert,' who was destined to desire for his own sex from birth. The psychiatric model, on the other hand, sought to find the root of 'abnormal' sexuality in childhood experiences. In this it owed its origin to Freud, although as the psychiatric discourse on sexuality developed it became a more normative enterprise than that envisaged by Freud, seeing homosexual desire as a misdirection of normal desire resulting from psychological damage – and therefore a psychiatric problem that was potentially susceptible to a cure.

Japanese sexology, as described by Frühstück, embraced both these models in a discourse of popular science. Among the most widely known of these were Habuto Eiji and Sawada Junjirō, whose *Perverse Sexual Desire* (*Hentai seiyoku*), published in 1915 was based on Krafft-Ebing's *Psychopathia Sexualis*. Habuto also launched a journal, *Sexual Desire and Humankind* (*Seiyoku to jinsei*), in the early 1920s and published a large number of popular books and magazine articles, which preached against homosexuality and masturbation. Sexological publications ranged from the scholarly to the popular, but the wide dissemination of sexological ideas is suggested by the fact that some of the journals were printed with *furigana* throughout and,

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along with publicity for contraceptives and medicines, also carried advertisements for the large department stores Mitsukoshi, Daimaru and Takashimaya. The popularizing of the Japanese sexologists' ideas also depended on their presence in general magazines and newspapers, such as *Fujin Kōron* and the *Asahi Shinbun*.

The activities of these Japanese sexologists are the most visible manifestation of the popular influence of the medical and psychiatric models of sexuality. It is worth reiterating that these are not two competing arguments about sexuality that are deployed in opposition to each other in *Confessions of a Mask*, but two models for sexual investigation – or two tropes for discussing sexuality – that have left their mark on the novel. We should not hope to find some neat schematization of models in relation to texts, or characters within them. As Sedgwick has pointed out, 'issues of modern homo/heterosexual definition are structured, not by the supersession of one model and the consequent withering away of another, but instead by the relations enabled by the unrationalized coexistence of different models during the times they do coexist' (Sedgwick 1990: 47).

VOCABULARIES OF TRUTH

The relationship of *Confessions of a Mask* to the search for sexual 'truth' that these twin discourses of sexuality shared, particularly as it was expressed through other media of the time, can be seen in its use of vocabulary for sexual activity and psychological phenomena and in the specific references it makes to the sexological enterprise. The second chapter of the novel

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begins: 'It was already just over one year that I had been worrying in the manner of a child who has been given a strangely shaped toy. I was in my thirteenth year' (MZ 1: 200). The narrator then goes on to describe his discovery of arousal, sexual fantasy and masturbation. That the narrator puts these discoveries in terms of *nayami* ('worry/anxiety' or perhaps 'agony' as in 'agony aunt') suggests the influence of Japanese sexology and the normative project of the medical model. *Nayami* is what any number of advice columns in magazines of the 1920s and 1930s sought to dispel but also what, through such columns and related surveys, sexologists sought to collate and analyze. That the narrator notes his age is a recurrent feature for each successive event in his sexual development that he relates (as it is also in Ōgai's *Vita Sexualis*), and it is reminiscent of the Japanese sexologists' attempt to collate data and discover reality. When did boys first masturbate? How did they discover it? Such questions were the stuff of their elaboration of a knowledge of sexual behaviour, the purpose of which was to define sexual normality. The narrator's description of an erection in this passage – 'it increased in volume' (*yōseki wo mashita*) uses the scientific vocabulary of a physiological survey, which formed a prominent part of the sexological enterprise.

Here and subsequently he refers to masturbation with the term *akushū* ('bad habit'). This choice of terminology helps to contextualize the narrator's account in specific currents of the sexological discourse. The account which then follows of the first instance of his 'bad habit' – while viewing a reproduction of Guido Reni's *Saint Sebastian* – also sets it in a specific (although not completely consistent) relationship to this discourse. The term he uses for ejaculation – *ejaculatio* – is not Japanese, but a German medical one (that is to say, Latin) appearing in

Roman script, which fits the Japanese sexologists' determination that the description of sexual phenomena be in terms of 'scientific' Western knowledge, rather than the uncivilized, unmodern terminology of Japanese tradition. A narratorial aside notes that pictures of Saint Sebastian are among the most favoured by 'inverts' (*tōsakusha*), especially 'congenital inverts' (*sententekina tōsakusha*), according to Magnus Hirschfeld. (The narrator uses the term *tōsakusha* throughout, rather than the equally current *dōseiaisha*, a translation of 'homosexual') The description of masturbation as a bad habit shows the narrator to be influenced by a severely normative strain of sexology even while his reference to Hirschfeld shows an awareness of a more progressive approach to sexuality.

Terms such as *akushū* and *jitoku* ('self-defilement') had been employed by those medical and pedagogical professionals who sought to determine (in both senses) the sexual behaviour of young Japanese in the late Meiji period and the negative connotations of the terms reflect the concern of these professionals that rapid social change, unhealthy living conditions and unenlightened beliefs were a threat to the health of young people and of the nation. Habuto and Sawada were among the most prominent exponents of this attitude to sexual behavior, but such views were challenged by a subsequent generation of sex researchers, such as Yamamoto Senji (Frühstück: 83-94), who, in the 1920s, aimed to lift the weight of moralizing intervention by redefining what was 'normal' and 'abnormal' sexual behaviour on the basis of statistical 'fact.' In this endeavour they were explicitly following the example of Hirschfeld, who had based his research on statistical surveys of German men's sexual behaviour. Hirschfeld, having concluded that masturbation was an almost universal phenomenon with no harmful

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physiological or psychological effects, coined a new term – *lpsation* – specifically to avoid negative/prohibitory connotations and Yamamoto Senji coined the Japanese term *jii* ('self-comforting') to translate this. Yamamoto's strain of sexology, which found itself aligned with socialist and social reform movements of the 1920s, was eclipsed in the 1930s by a return to more normative descriptions of, and prescriptions for, sexual behaviour, which were aligned with the need for military strength (dependent on strong young men) and an ever larger population. In this context reproduction was stressed as the sole aim of sexual activity and the earlier vocabulary was revived. In early postwar research, zoologist Asayama Shin'ichi returned to the methods of Yamamoto but his surveys (Frühstück: 213 n.29) begun in 1948 (the year before publication of *Confessions of a Mask*) continued to use the more prescriptive and accusatory terminology used by the narrator of *Confessions of a Mask*.

The inconsistency in the relationship of *Confessions of a Mask* to the sexological discourse therefore lies in the fact that the narrator depends on two contradictory strains of that discourse: on the one hand, the more normative and prescriptive interventions of the Meiji state, strengthened in the prewar and wartime era of increasing social control and continued under a different guise in the period of Occupation; and on the other hand, an ostensibly more progressive strain which led from European sexual reformers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to liberal researchers and educationists in Japan of the 1920s.

The postwar context in which surveys such as Asayama's were carried out and in which *Confessions of a Mask* was being written is suggested by the establishment by the Occupation-era Japanese government of norms for what was termed 'purity education'

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(*junketsu kyōiku*). Whereas Meiji pedagogues, Taisho reformers and the wartime authorities had all shared a concern for 'sex education' (*seikyōiku*) – albeit with differing agendas – the postwar Ministry of Education in 1947 published a first paper on 'purity education' and in 1949 established a Council for Purity Education made up of 'representatives of the Women's Christian Temperance Union, social critics, university professors, teachers, feminists, medical doctors and officials from the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare' (Frühstück: 180). The core item of the 'Basic Outline of Purity Education' which this council produced was 'the teaching of abstinence before marriage'. Normative interventions in the field of sexual behaviour were, therefore, still very much a part of the bureaucratic agenda in the year of *Confessions of a Mask's* publication, even though the supporting rhetoric had changed from (Meiji) civilization and (wartime) national strengthening to democracy and scientific progress.

The early twentieth-century elaboration of sexual knowledge and sex education to which this Purity Education was heir had been chiefly concerned with two problems and two constituencies: masturbation and venereal disease among students and soldiers. The overriding concern was that excessive masturbation led to neurasthenia (*shinkei suijaku*), which produced mentally and physically weak young men unsuited to the tasks of nation building and military strengthening, while venereal disease was a direct threat to the health of young men. 'Headaches, a pale complexion, weak eyes, passivity, melancholy, stomach aches, and tuberculosis were all understood as definite signs of indulgence in masturbation' and parents were encouraged to watch for these signs (Frühstück: 74). Neurasthenia was frequently

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diagnosed in middle school students and was viewed by the military and public health administrations as a precursor to more serious illnesses (63). In the public debate on sex education that followed a series of articles in the *Yomiuri Shinbun* in 1908-09 it was taken for granted that masturbation and same-sex love (*dōseiai*) were 'common among boys in schools, factory dormitories, juvenile reformatories, and prisons' and 'masturbation was often collapsed with homosexuality' (68). The causal link between this behaviour and neurasthenia was taken as medical fact.

The conflation of masturbation with homosexuality is also illustrated by Watanuki Yosaburō, vice-director of the Japanese Philanthropic Hospital in Shanghai, who in 1905 wrote about the two in zoological terms: 'Look at all the animals on earth. Not a bird or beast, not an insect or fish practices masturbation, much less [male-male] interfemoral intercourse (*kosaiin*). ... How, then, can it be proper for humans, the most lofty of all creatures, to engage in practices that are beneath any beast?' (quoted in Pflugfelder: 241). The narrator of *Confessions of a Mask* is, in the course of the novel, associated with a pale complexion, passivity, melancholy, stomach aches and (suspected) tuberculosis. He is unfit for military service, physically weak and prone to lurid fantasy. His erotic attachments are also predominantly homosexual. The boy as revealed in this confession, whose 'bad habit' is frequently mentioned, is thus an almost perfect realization of the fears of the educators, doctors and administrators of his parents' and grandparents' generations. The same-sex fantasies and autoerotic activity described by the narrator are not entirely separate elements, for in the prevailing discourse of sexuality, especially for his parents' generation but also at the time described (the late 1930s, when the more progressive

elements of the sexological enterprise had been largely extinguished), they were part of the same problem.

That awareness of the dangers of neurasthenia was widespread (and that the interventions of Japanese sexologists carried weight in the popular imagination) is evidenced by Oda Sakunosuke's short story *Six White Venus* (*Roppaku kinsei*, 1940, published 1946), in which the son of an Osaka doctor is seen reading Habuto Eiji in secret at high school (Oda 1994: 76). He passes the book on to his slow-witted younger brother, along with works by Kunikida Doppo, Morita Sōhei and Maupassant, by way of a sexual education. The 'scientific' discourse of sex has clearly influenced the older boy, who refers to a girl – in the context of a date – as a '*Mädchen*.' When the younger brother later attempts suicide, after progressing to *The Brothers Karamazov*, his suicide note mixes up Russian angst with vague notions of heredity and fear of illness: he is worried over the existence of God, believes he is infected with tuberculosis and possibly leprosy and, since his parents suffer from neither of these, has concluded that he is not their child. He also expresses a sense of guilt over his first, unsuccessful sexual experience. From this story, set in the late 1930s, we can see that familiarity with popular sexology, along with other vaguely 'dirty' books, is portrayed as part of growing up, and that growing up is itself problematized as an experience attended by the interlinked threats of illness and sexuality, both of which are best understood in the language of popular medical science. When the teenager's erratic behaviour and scholastic failure lead his mother to seek the advice of a psychiatrist, it is clear from the recommended treatment – rubdowns with cold towels, firmer bedding and a ceramic pillow – that he has been diagnosed as suffering from sexual neurasthenia. A slightly

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vaguer explanation of *shinkei suiaku* appears in Fukunaga Takehiko's *Grass Flowers* but again attests to the association with same-sex desire and adolescent obsessions. In a scene where the student Shiomi's feelings for the younger Fujiki have been discussed, Shiomi attributes his own poor archery skills to his *shinkei suiaku*. His friend Kasuga sums up the symptoms thus: 'Your body is here, but your spirit is not here.' He then goes on: 'Don't worry too much – everybody goes through it at some point' (Fukunaga 1956: 75).

The authorities' concern for the health of schoolchildren and its military motive, as described by Frühstück, can be seen to intrude directly in the narrative of *Confessions of a Mask*, and the narrator emphasizes his failure to meet official medical expectations, which we would expect from a masturbating invert. Having missed a day of school because of a cold, he is required to attend the annual physical examination the following day with two other boys:

'Thirty-nine point five!'

The assistant, who had been in the hospital corps, announced it to the school doctor.

Writing '39.5' on the sheet, the doctor said to himself, 'He needs to get to forty kilos at least. ' (MZ 1: 228)

The military and educational authorities are here brought together in their concern to record and promote the health of the nation's youth. This concern is in opposition to the characteristics of the masturbating invert revealed in the narrator, so that the sexuality of this boy is implicitly represented as unhealthy, and unsatisfactory to the educational/military authorities.

MODELS OF DESIRE

The comparison of Mishima's fiction with earlier representations of same-sex desire in the first chapter of this study suggested that *Confessions of a Mask* stands out from such earlier works in that it moves from the description of types to the elaboration of an identity. However, this does not mean that the identity expressed is an obvious one, or that it corresponds to what later readers might think of as a 'gay identity'. The preceding discussion illustrates that, while it is tempting to see in *Confessions of a Mask* a 'universally' recognizable account of a young man's discovery of his sexuality and realization that his experience of it is not that of the majority, the terms of this discovery and the associations of the feelings and activities 'confessed' are those of a pre-existing and specific discourse. The narrator, in a 'confession' that owes something of its form both to the sexological survey and to the psychoanalytical case-study, anchors his account of his own experience in the language of scientific knowledge available to him, which is one that pathologizes this experience. At the same time, though, he makes repeated reference to an alternative expression of the experience of sexuality, outside this scientific framework, through a series of cultural references to mostly Western literature and myth: he quotes Whitman, Wilde, Huysmans and, of course, he elaborates a fantasy about the figure of Saint Sebastian. The fifth chapter of this study will examine how these cultural references are employed in *Confessions of a Mask* and other texts, but it can be observed at this point that *Confessions of a Mask* dramatizes the internal conflict between the search for identity and the recognition of the inadequacy of models available for that identity. It is worth noting where the two scientific discourses – the medical model and the psychiatric model – make themselves felt

before moving to examine how the appeal to an alternative expression outside these operates.

The pathologizing medical model decides the narrator's choice of terminology for describing himself – 'invert' (*tōsakusha*) – and his 'bad habit.' *Tōsaku* is also the Japanese word used to translate Freud's conception of sexual inversion to describe same-sex desire, but in the medical model inversion goes with the elaboration of a separate type, generally marked by the attributes of the opposite sex. This is, of course, also a source for the association of same-sex desire with gender ambivalence discussed in Chapter One, which entered popular discourse from the studies of sexologists through *ryōki*-related publications. The invert is therefore a feminine man. As Dollimore has pointed out, the definition of the homosexual as feminine also leads to its rejection by those who find identification with the opposite sex unsatisfying or irrelevant, for example in terms of an affirmation of their own difference from effeminate homosexuals, as in James Baldwin's (1924-87) *Giovanni's Room* (1956 – see Dollimore 1991: 54). In *Confessions of a Mask* the narrator does not so much reject this definition of himself as feminine, as much as pass over it. (By contrast, as discussed in Chapter One above, it is specifically rejected by the protagonist in *Forbidden Colours*). An awareness of the association with femininity and 'wrong' gender identification is nevertheless present in the text. As a small boy, he is so impressed by the exotic female conjuror Tenkatsu that he attempts to imitate her by dressing up in his mother's clothes and make-up, to the consternation of the adults (MZ 1: 187). After seeing the film *Cleopatra*, he also goes home and dresses as her. Although this is presented as unthinking play on the part of the child, the adult narrator clearly makes a connection between this childish transvestism and inversion: 'What was it that I hoped for

from this dressing as a woman (*josō*)? Later I found the same sort of hopes as mine in Heliogabalus, the emperor in Rome's decline, that destroyer of Rome's ancient gods, that beastly Caesar' (189).¹

More generally, the narrator's attempt to integrate his account into the field of medical discourse is exemplified by the proliferation of medical terminology: his grandmother's cranial neuralgia, his own autointoxication, anaemia and tonsillitis, his reference to 'the phenomenon of erection,' spermatozoa, chlorosis, arsenic injections, sulphuric acid and 'the mathematics of life.' It is as if he's trying to give the narrative scientific authority, and lend it the weight that Ōgai's *Vita Sexualis* had by virtue of its author's place in the medical establishment. As suggested above, the establishment of scientific truth in the field of sex also had a more contemporary resonance as part of the rhetoric of the postwar *kasutori* magazines.

The psychiatric model and its dependence on the idea of therapy are illustrated by the psychiatrist Sandor Feldman, discussed by Dollimore. An essay by Feldman, published in 1956, perhaps gives the flavour of psychiatric definitions of homosexuality as they took hold in Japan especially during and after the period of Occupation: 'I have learned that, essentially homosexuals want to mate with the opposite sex. In therapy my intention is to discover what kind of fear or distress diverted the patient from the straight line and made a devious detour necessary' (quoted in Dollimore: 171). Part of the narrator's intention in *Confessions of a Mask*

¹ Heliogabalus as presented in historiography would certainly fit the image of the feminized invert. According to Gibbon, he 'affected to copy the dress and manners of the female sex, preferred the distaff to the scepter, and dishonoured the principle dignities of the empire by distributing them among his numerous lovers; one of whom was publicly invested with the title and authority of the emperor's, or, as he more properly styled himself, of the empress's husband' (Gibbon 1983: 148).

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is also to discover these origins of his own sexual diversion and this relates to the form of the novel as partly a case-study describing the childhood explanations of his sexuality. Hence we are told of his early years in the suffocating environment of his grandmother's sickroom, separated from his parents, with only girls as companions. We are given an early hint of his adolescent and adult sado-masochistic desires in his childhood predilection for bloodthirsty stories and pictures. There is also a concern to explain the specifics of his adult desires, so we are told that he can only be attracted to men without a trace of the intellectual because of his adolescent attraction to the non-intellectual Ōmi. When he sees Ōmi exercising on the parallel bars, shirtless, what most strongly attracts him is the sight of his armpits: 'What made that [hairy armpits] a stereotype for me was clearly Ōmi's armpits' (MZ 1: 235). Thus both the general direction of the narrator's sexual desire and its specific features and fetishes are ascribed to formative experiences in Kōchan's childhood.

DESIRE FOR DISORDER

Awareness of, and resistance to, the normative official discourse of sexuality is also evident in male-female relationships portrayed in other of Mishima's works. *Kyōko's House* is the story of four young men as their lives coincide around the central figure of Kyōko, a woman separated from her husband. Throughout the course of the novel Kyōko is able to fashion relationships as she chooses, leading a life of freedom and affluence. This freedom, though, is threatened by the figure of her husband and by her daughter, the result of her marriage, who lives with her and

intervenes at key points in the narrative to permit or forbid aspects of Kyōko's relationships.

Kyōko's House is generally treated critically as a novel of nihilism, as *Confessions of a Mask* often is. Certainly this is a significant theme, as the male characters meet with failure in various forms in the course of the novel and one of the four, the businessman Seiichirō, takes as the guiding rule of his life his belief in the impending destruction of the world. In the case of Kyōko, the theme of nihilism is linked to her fondness for the disorder of the war years and the aftermath of the war. However, her concept of disorder and devastation (the word that frequently recurs is *haikyo* – 'ruins') is partly an aesthetic one, but also an erotic one; when she sees one of the four men, Shunkichi, fight in a professional boxing match, what she finds attractive in him is the sense of ruins in his face. When she discovers that her husband has sent a private detective to investigate her life, the idea of 'ruins' is set in explicit contrast to the order of family life (as she realizes she may have to return to their former married life):

'Humanity, love, hope, ideals..... The resurrection of all these ridiculous values. A complete conversion. And then the most painful thing: the complete denial of the ruins that she had come to love so much. Not just the ruination that can be seen, but even the ruination that cannot be seen!' (MZ 7: 414-15)

Disorder is clearly more desirable than order, and order is defined as the order of family life and the reinstitution of social norms, which the return of her husband would represent. She figures this return to herself as the end of an era and the beginning of a new one: 'the era of seriousness, the era of the school swot.' The failure with which Kyōko meets is that at the end of the novel her husband does indeed return, marking the end of the life represented by 'Kyōko's House.' The entry of her husband is marked not by a scene of reconciliation or by the

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appearance of the husband himself in the narrative, but by an image of destruction: the irruption of his seven huge dogs, filling the house with their smell and their barking.

The 'era' that ends is clearly one that is set apart from sexual norms. The four young men swap girlfriends; the only one of them to marry visits prostitutes in Tokyo and attends an orgy in New York; another enters a sado-masochistic relationship with an older woman with whom he commits a double suicide; the only one not to have had any sexual relationships in the course of the narrative to that point loses his virginity to Kyōko the night before her husband is to return. This behaviour is clearly at odds with the 'official' version of sexuality set out in the Ministry of Education's 'Basic Outline of Purity Education' with its emphasis on married life. It is also at odds with the wider drive for economic growth and the reestablishment of normal peacetime values that characterized the 1950s in Japan, a period that Mishima himself described *Kyōko's House* as encapsulating. The transition from 'postwar' to peacetime (the end of *senjo*) was the goal of the times, but one that is lamented by Kyōko. Of course, dissipation of all kinds, including sexual, was a recurrent theme of postwar literature, particularly among those writers who came to be known as the *buraiha*. However the sexual adventures of the characters of *Kyōko's House* are presented not in the spirit of a confession of wild behaviour, but as constitutive of their personalities. This is the case in the actor Osamu's sado-masochistic relationship with the moneylender, Kiyomi. Like the other men in the story, Osamu has a sense of emptiness in his life, in his case the absence of a great role for him on the stage, a role he envisages as involving blood. Unable to progress in his acting career and bring attention to himself this way, he fills his time with going to the gym, where his physical development makes

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him a star of a different sort. However, it is only his experience with Kiyomi that brings him true fulfillment, which is expressed in terms of 'care' and 'caresses' and a sense of true existence – all benefits usually associated with a conventional married relationship. Naked in Kiyomi's room, he feels a sharp, cold sensation in his side and then sees the razor with which she has cut him. Osamu thinks: 'This is surely the woman I had always hoped for. At last, I have met that woman.' This has not only fulfilled his need for a great role but has somehow made him whole in a way that none of the novel's conventional relationships has done for the others. 'Up until now everything had merely passed over his skin, but there had been nothing more definite than that momentary pain to certify his own existence. What he really needed was pain' (MZ 7: 351). In a society officially striving for comfort, peace and stability, Osamu finds meaning in pain, violence and ultimately destruction.

THE SYMPTOMATIC TEXT

Sexology and state interventions sought to establish the truth in matters of sexual desire and Mishima's fiction reveals both the effects of these regimes of truth and a resistance to them. Another project to discover the truth of sexual desire, and one more familiar in the years since Mishima's death, is psychoanalysis. One of the favourite pastimes of those who have written on Mishima, whether their subject is his life or his work, is amateur psychoanalytical enquiry. With the prominence of violent and sexual themes in parts his work, of dreams and fantasy, and with the overlap between fantasy and reality (not least in his suicide), there are certainly rich and easy pickings for those who have chosen this route. This is part of the general

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tendency for critical discussion of Mishima's work to slide into biographical speculation identified in the Introduction to this study, using assumptions about his own politics or personal history as a basis for interpreting his fiction. The two attempts to interpret *Confessions of a Mask* in terms of the Oedipus complex (Okuno 1954 and Maeda 1979) have followed this route. This interchangeability of author and text is pursued by those who have sought to analyse Mishima-the-author by putting Mishima-the-text on the psychoanalyst's couch and such is the purpose of Kitagaki Ryūichi's study, *Mishima Yukio no seishin bunseki* (A Psychoanalysis of Mishima Yukio, 1982) and more recently of Jerry S. Piven's *The Madness and Perversion of Yukio Mishima* (2004).

Piven's analysis is typical of earlier writing in this vein in its treatment of *Confessions of a Mask*, taking it as autobiographical material to be analyzed directly, finding in the boyhood experiences of the novel's protagonist clues to the adult personality of the author. Mishima's own misogyny and fear of disease are traced to the boy's experience of living with his sick grandmother, by means of an identification of women with disease. Here is Piven's description of this causal chain: 'Given his fear, disgust, and resentment it seems likely that Mishima's sexuality was based on reaction formations against anything emasculating, sick, weak, feminine, or messy, and he turned his erotism toward becoming and seducing masculine, clean, and powerful men' (26). This kind of psychological detective work is beguilingly successful, because Mishima gives us such well-formed clues in his fiction. However what it misses is the knowing way in which these clues have been planted, for Mishima was himself fascinated by psychoanalysis from an early age and even at the age of sixteen wrote that he had 'had enough'

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of it (Matsumoto 2000: 512). Therefore the ease with which readers of *Confessions of a Mask* can identify the sources of misogyny, phallic narcissism and inversion should not convince them of their skill as literary psychoanalysts so much as alert them to the care with which Mishima patterned certain of his narratives on psychoanalysis itself.

It is probably easier to disentangle this influence of psychoanalysis from the thorny question of Mishima's own psychosexual characteristics by looking first at another text, which does not appear to reflect the author's own life in the way that *Confessions of a Mask* does. It should be emphasized here that the purpose of this discussion is not to discover anything in the text by means of psychoanalytical theory, but to illuminate what aspects of psychoanalysis have been put into the text. *Thirst for Love*, published in 1950, the year after *Confessions of a Mask*, traces the course of the disaster ensuing from a young widow's inability to accept her own desire for the young gardener in the household of her father-in-law. Mishima's afterword to a 1953 collection of his works (MZ 28: 103) includes, as a final aside, the 'slightly frivolous confession' that much of the detail of the heroine's madness in *Thirst for Love* is taken from Freud's *Studies on Hysteria* (1895). Although Mishima has much more to say, in this short afterword, about the influence of Mauriac than about Freud, his indebtedness to Freud extends to more than a few colourful details. The whole structure of the novel follows from the pattern of hysteria identified in the *Studies on Hysteria*.

Freud's 1895 work, which he co-authored with Joseph Breuer, contains a number of case studies of women analyzed by either of the two authors and a theoretical essay outlining the key features of hysteria. Both the theory and the details of the case studies are reflected in the

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narrative of *Thirst for Love*. The outline of the nature of hysteria is summed up in the authors' statement that 'Hysterics suffer mainly from reminiscences' (Freud 2001 2: 7). Whereas the emotional content of people's experiences – the affect which the experiences produce – is normally discharged by 'the whole class of voluntary and involuntary reflexes' (8) – words, tears, laughter, revenge, etc. – some experiences are either so traumatic that they are immediately repressed or occur when the individual is in a state (e.g. only half awake or in a hypnoid state, for whatever reason) that does not allow the experience to register fully in consciousness. In such cases the affect, since it has not been discharged ('abreacted' in Freud's terminology), loses none of its potency over time and so is constantly recalled, but recalled only unconsciously. The psychological pain associated with the traumatic experience undergoes a 'conversion' in which it is converted to physical pain or manifests itself in involuntary actions symbolically linked to the pain of the trauma: nervous tics, repeated phrases, obsessive behaviours, irrational fears, etc. In addition to these chronic symptoms there may also be hysterical attacks (emotional outbursts, or physical spasms) which the hysteric cannot remember after they have ended. These attacks are the surfacing of a repressed consciousness, which exists alongside normal consciousness and in which the memory of the traumatic experience and the emotions associated with it reside.

Etsuko in *Thirst for Love* displays a number of symptoms typical of hysteria from the beginning of the narrative – 'inexplicable' feelings which do not have any immediate apparent cause. We learn in the first scene that 'Etsuko, born and brought up in Tokyo and so unfamiliar with Osaka, entertained inexplicable fears for this city' (MZ 2: 9-10). We are then told of her

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frequent flushes: 'Her cheeks were remarkably hot. This happened a lot. For no reason, and certainly not because of any illness, her cheeks would burn suddenly, as if set alight' (10). She also frequently daydreams, which is a characteristic of hysterics that is identified by Freud.

What allows us to link these minor symptoms to hysteria is the existence of a series of traumatic experiences which Etsuko is not able to express and which live undischarged in her unconscious. Her husband had been callously unfaithful to her and had left evidence of his affairs (gifts Etsuko had not bought him, photographs of the other women) prominently displayed in their house in order to arouse Etsuko's jealousy. He had rejected Etsuko's sexual advances. However, when, as a result of all this, Etsuko had resolved to kill herself, he fell ill with typhoid and died within two weeks. Three of his girlfriends came to visit while Etsuko was nursing him in hospital. Not only did she have to nurse him in his last days and endure this insult, but she had to watch him die in spectacularly traumatic fashion, smeared in bloody excrement (57-61).

Nursing the sick is identified by Freud and Breuer as a common element in the genesis of hysteria, as it occurs in three of the five case histories they describe. Anna O. is found to have had a frightening hallucination at her father's sickbed, which was the original cause of her symptoms. Frau Emmy von N.'s symptoms also began when she was nursing her sick daughter and were worsened by her witnessing her husband's death. Fräulein Elisabeth von R. was exhausted by nursing her father, mother and sister. In his comments on the case of Fräulein von R., Freud notes: 'There are good reasons for the fact that sick-nursing plays such a significant part in the prehistory of cases of hysteria' (Freud 2: 161). Interrupted sleep and

constant worry play a part, but more importantly the burden of nursing over time means the person 'will, on the one hand, adopt a habit of suppressing every sign of his own emotion, and on the other, will soon divert his attention away from his own impressions, since he has neither time nor strength to do justice to them.' These emotions arising from the person's experience at this time are, therefore, repressed, but if the patient dies, then these impressions and their attendant emotions come into play and 'after a short interval of exhaustion the hysteria, whose seeds were sown during the time of nursing, breaks out' (162). Mishima takes the trope of nursing the sick, but gives Freud's interpretation a twist. Etsuko does not experience the trauma of watching her husband die and is too busy to express the emotions caused by his unfaithfulness, but her repressed trauma is replaced by a sense of heightened feeling: 'There was a pointless passion in my nursing, but who would know? Who would know that the tears I shed at my husband's bedside were tears of farewell to this passion that consumed me every day?' (MZ 2: 47). Whatever emotions Etsuko experiences are buried in her feverish ministrations: 'Her whole existence was now a single look, a single stare. (...) Beside this half-naked invalid, stinking from incontinence, Etsuko only dozed for one or two hours a day' (58).

Thus the seeds of her hysteria are sown. The emotions aroused by her husband's unfaithfulness go unexpressed since, at the point when she intends to take revenge by attempting suicide, she must start nursing him in hospital, and to these emotions is added the trauma of watching him die. A further complication in Freud's account of Fräulein von R's hysteria is that her nursing of her father forces her to suppress an erotic attachment to a young

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man, and another of the case histories is that of Miss Lucy R., whose hysteria was caused by her refusal to admit to herself that she was in love with her employer. In Mishima's account of Etsuko, too, love for a young man gives rise to a further traumatic complication. For Etsuko is in love with Saburō, the young gardener employed by her elderly father-in-law, whose mistress she has become. The impossibility of a sexual relationship with Saburō and the unwanted, but apparently unavoidable, sexual relationship with Yakichi create unresolved tension for Etsuko, a trauma which she is unable to express and which therefore adds to her existing hysteria. The acme of this second trauma is reached when the maid, Miyo, is found to be pregnant with Saburō's child and it is decided that Miyo and Saburō must marry. At this point a typical feature of hysteria is seen: the recurrence of the symptoms associated with the original trauma: 'Etsuko recalled vividly all those sleepless nights from late summer into autumn when her husband tortured her by not coming home night after night. (...) The same symptoms as then appeared – trembling at an inexplicable feeling of cold, and a kind of spasm that brought out goose bumps all the way to the back of her hands' (152-53).

The most dramatic manifestations of Etsuko's hysteria are three events that can be identified as hysterical attacks: at the festival, where she finds herself pressed up against Saburō in the crowd and scratches wildly at his back; when she puts her hand into the fire and deliberately burns it; and when, at the climax of the novel, she bludgeons Saburō to death with a mattock. That these are hysterical attacks is clear from the descriptions: in both of the first two Etsuko appears not to remember the events immediately after them and in both the festival and the killing she is described as suddenly possessed by an unusual power (*'odorokubeki kyōjin na*

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chikara,' 210). Finally, by killing Saburō, she rids herself of her hysteria through one of the means identified by Freud as achieving the abreaction of powerful affects: the cathartic effect of revenge. In the final scene of the novel, Yakichi is amazed by the peacefulness of her sleep.

So it seems clear that Mishima took considerable trouble to make Etsuko's behaviour conform to the pattern of hysteria described by Freud, in its origins and its symptoms. To trace these elements in *Thirst for Love* is not to diagnose Etsuko in any way, but simply to recognize the pattern that Mishima imposed on his narrative. Having recognized this, we should not be surprised to see a similar attention to the concepts of psychoanalysis elsewhere in his fiction and a similar willingness to use the model of the Freudian case study for his own literary purposes. It should dissuade us from taking these elements as proof of the aptness of a psychoanalytic approach to Mishima's fiction, as if he had naively provided us with the material for a case history. We can now see that to say, on the basis of *Confessions of a Mask*, that *Mishima was a phallic narcissist and a misogynist homosexual as a result of his childhood experiences with his grandmother* is in fact equivalent to saying, on the basis of *Thirst for Love*, that *Etsuko was a hysteric as a result of the traumatic experience of her husband's death*. Both statements tell us something about the structure of the two novels and why it is as it is, but all they can tell us about the author himself is that he had a keen interest in, and deep understanding of, psychoanalysis.

RESISTING ANALYSIS

Bearing in mind this interest by Mishima in Freud's ideas, we can turn to look at his next major novel, *Forbidden Colours*, which also makes use of psychoanalytical concepts, but in a rather more complex way than *Thirst for Love*. Because of the focus on same-sex desire which *Forbidden Colours* shares with *Confessions of a Mask*, the narrative treatment of this theme has often been linked by critics to the events of Mishima's own life. Indeed, it is a commonplace of commentary on Mishima's development as a writer that his six-month trip overseas from December 1951, in particular his time in Greece, marks a decisive break, after which he progressed from the pessimistic themes of his earliest novels to the sunnier atmosphere of *The Sound of Waves* and did not return to the darkness of his earlier accounts of homosexual desire. This voyage to the West came between the publication of the first and second parts of *Forbidden Colours* and Donald Keene sees the account of Yūichi's homosexual affairs in the second part of this novel as an attempt to 'purge himself of all the "darkness" within him before making a fresh start' (Keene 1984: 1194).

The idea of a schema for progression through stages of sexuality is a persistent one. As Dollimore says: 'In certain respects psychoanalysis actually shares with metaphysics a residual teleology, the idea of a normative sexuality achieved by passing through the sequential stages of a universal psychosexual development' (Dollimore 1991: 173). The personal history structure of *Confessions of a Mask* attempts to map such a development but denies it in the final scene of the novel, where the continued reality of the narrator's desires is affirmed when, in a dance-hall with Sonoko, he forgets her existence as he is struck by sexual desire for a muscular young man

who has taken off his shirt. Matsumoto Tōru applies the same schema to *Forbidden Colours* itself, describing a development from homosexuality to heterosexuality, from the Yūichi of the first part, who confesses to Shunsuke his inability to love women, to the Yūichi of the second part, who can have a relationship with women in reality. According to this schema, Matsumoto identifies as the key passage in the novel the scene in which Yūichi recognizes Mrs. Kaburagi's physical beauty on their trip to Kashikojima, after she has saved him from blackmail by pretending to have had an affair with him. (Matsumoto 2005: 147). However this reading, of a progress from homosexual to heterosexual themes, is an unhelpfully circular argument, in that it depends on a specific conception of same-sex desire, as a stage which should be passed through on the road of sexual development. This conception, which derives from (but, in this severely normative form, is not found in) the tradition of Freudian psychoanalysis, defines adult homosexuality as a failure to develop. The circularity of the reading lies in its reliance on the same model of sexuality as produced the elements in the text which it finds to support itself and, following the preceding discussion of *Thirst for Love*, it should come as no surprise to find elements derived from Freud in Mishima's description of Yūichi's sexuality. It is an unhelpful reading in that it finds in the text only a reflection of its own assumptions. If, instead, we start by recognizing the text's dependence on the contemporary discourse of sexuality and on Freud, we are better able to see the nuances of its engagement with that discourse, for, to a greater extent than in *Thirst for Love*, Mishima challenges Freud in *Forbidden Colours*, as well as relying on him.

The importance of the psychoanalytical model in this context in postwar Japan can be seen,

for example, from the focus, in popular journalistic accounts of same-sex desire, on the idea of arrested development and the possibility of a cure, as well as explicit references, in these discussions, to Freud. The August 1950 edition of the journal *Ningen tankyū* (Exploration of Humanity), which described itself as a 'sexology magazine for the cultured' (*bunkajin no seikagakushi*), published two letters in its advice column from worried young homosexual men, both of whom ask about the possibility of a cure, under the title 'Consultations and Answers: an Analysis of People of Abnormal Sexuality' (*Sōdan to kaitō: ijō seiaisha no bunseki*, Takahashi 1947). The replies are written by Takahashi Tetsu, a well-known writer on sexual matters in the postwar period. Takahashi writes that homosexuality used to be considered congenital and incurable, but that Freud has shown that the phenomenon is not restricted to homosexuals but is a phase through which most people pass in their childhood. In some people, though, a vivid experience at that time causes it to remain in adulthood, he tells his readers. He identifies this as one kind of homosexual, while another, he says, is the narcissistic kind, since those who are deeply narcissistic may be attracted by those who are most like them. He informs his correspondents that they themselves represent two different kinds of homosexual. This rejection of the notion of congenital homosexuality and the identification of types of homosexual are indeed to be found in Freud's discussion of inversion in the first of his *Three Essays on Sexuality* (Freud 7: 136-48). The January 1951 edition of the same magazine carried an interview, again by Takahashi Tetsu, with three homosexual men in their twenties, 'Heaven or Hell? A Gathering of Male Homosexuals' (*Tengoku ka jigoku ka – danshi dōseiaisha no tsudo*, Takahashi 1951). He informs his interviewees that their sexuality is often a result of a failure to

develop beyond the homosexual stage in adolescence – to 'graduate' (*sotsugyō suru*) to heterosexuality. The interviewees seem less than convinced, although one makes a nod to Freudian ideas of causation by replying that his step-mother was cruel to him. Takahashi also claims that if people in their position come to see him two or three times a month they are generally cured. So it is clear from this and many similar discussions in popular journalism of the time that the idea of 'progress' *from* homosexuality as a stage of sexual development was a familiar opinion in Japan at the time *Forbidden Colours* was being published. The concept of phases of sexuality is further attested in Fukunaga Takehiko's *Grass Flowers*, published four years after *Forbidden Colours*. In this, Shiomi is told by a friend not to worry about his love for Fujiki because everyone goes through stages as they grow to adulthood: *asexuel*, *bisexuel* and *homosexuel* (which appear in the text in French with a katakana gloss, Fukunaga: 103-04).

Within *Forbidden Colours*, Freudian notions inform the narrative in minute ways, as when the industrialist Kawada, who has successfully kept his homosexuality secret from his family and avoided marriage by an elaborate ruse, is depicted as suffering from a facial twitch: 'Kawada's facial neuralgia probably had arisen from such a never-ending betrayal of his heart' (MZ 3: 342). Hints of the Freudian account of homosexuality are repeatedly found in reference to Yūichi, as when it is stated that he lives alone with his mother, since his father is dead. As the narrative unfolds, Yūichi's mother comes more and more to fit the mould of the overbearing, controlling mother, while the character who chiefly controls and manipulates Yūichi – Shunsuke – becomes identified with her, as a second controlling mother. For instance, as Shunsuke writes a note for him to prepare the next step in his relationship with Kyōko, 'Yūichi

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made an association from this wizened old hand to his mother's pale and slightly puffy hands. It was precisely these two hands that had awakened within this young man a passion for sham marriage, for vice, for mendaciousness and for the art of fraud and that had driven him on in that direction' (169).

However Mishima is also at pains to reject psychoanalytical explanations. When Yūichi, under Shunsuke's tutelage, encourages the older woman, Mrs. Kaburagi, to fall in love with him, Mishima characteristically names the obvious pattern of their affair before the reader does: 'Perhaps as an expression of the fact that Mrs. Kaburagi was reaching the age that society would generally think of as that of a mother, what she detected in Yūichi was a taboo preventing love between mother and son' (98). This suggests and, in so doing, denies the association of Yūichi's sexuality with the failure to overcome the Oedipus complex identified by Freud as one of the causes of homosexuality. Mishima is therefore conscious of, and at the same time rejecting, a Freudian interpretation. To avoid the reader thinking it, he names it. There is also explicit rejection: Shunsuke, like Mishima, is always ahead of any attempt to psychologize: 'Shunsuke despised modern psychology's enthusiasm for detective work, which held that unintended words and actions in the hustle and bustle of one's daily life revealed some true feeling beyond that which was to be found in his carefully elaborated prose' (144).

A more fundamental rejection of the psychoanalytical model and the unconscious depths which it takes as its object is one seen not just in *Forbidden Colours* but throughout Mishima's fiction, when external/surface appearances are taken as synonymous with internal sentiments or characteristics. For instance, we read how 'the double fold of one of Kyōko's eyelids would

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somehow acquire a third fold, which her husband found frightening to see. That was because it became clear in that moment that his wife was thinking nothing at all' (155). Obviously this is, logically, a non-sequitur, but Mishima is fond of this kind of association. It is a denial of psychological depth, since it suggests there is no break between surface and depth, between what is visible and some hidden truth. This is not just an affectation of Mishima's narrative, but links his texts to the medical model of sexuality and psychology which sought to define psychological types according to physical characteristics, including phrenology and the typology of homosexual described according to physical characteristics by late 19th-century sexologists, the model which psychoanalysis rejected. It operates, in Mishima, by ascribing moral significance to surface phenomena, against the move of 'modern psychology,' detested by Shunsuke, to downgrade the significance of the surface in favour of the interior.

Similarly, Mishima's whole account of human motivation can be seen as a reproach to Freud. One of the idiosyncrasies of his style is the (sometimes absurd) overdetermination of characters' actions. The smallest actions and modulations of speech are *intended* to have very specific, and often highly involved, effects on other characters. By relying on these effects, and the efficacy of their own words and actions, Mishima's characters are taking quite risky strategies. This typifies Shunsuke's various ruses in his use of Yūichi to manipulate women. In this way, Mishima's plots can build a very elaborate chain of interactions. Sometimes the outcome of these interactions is a direct affront to our experience of human behaviour, in which unintended consequences and hazard play a far greater part; but especially to our post-Freudian understanding of human behaviour, based on the dialectic of ego and

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unconscious impulse rather than the unrestricted play of the will apparently presented to us by Mishima. Mishima's sometimes incredible account of motivation, then, can be seen as part of his attempt to reject the psychoanalytical model, and his privileging of an unrestrained ego, as in the person of Shunsuke.

A small example of this, which reinterprets what would readily be recognized as an example of the parapraxes, or slips, to which Freud gave much weight, occurs when Kyōko takes Yūichi to Yokohama with Namiki (her lover). She introduces him to Namiki as 'my cousin Keichan' but then later accidentally calls him 'Yūchan,' which Namiki instantly notices. The narrative tells us: 'The tone of the slip of the tongue she made when she said, 'Yūchan, could you...?' had a conscious tension about it from the start, which told that it was a deliberate slip' (275). This example is typical, for Mishima's characters don't make Freudian slips; rather, they give carefully constructed signals.

Ambivalence towards Freud can also be traced in the use made of the concept of Narcissism in *Forbidden Colours*. As the narrative introduces the homosexual world of café *Rudon*, it describes two types of homosexual – the congenital (*sententeki*) and the narcissistic. The narrative voice tells us of the narcissistic type: 'By extension from the beauty of his own face that has been the object of so much praise, he establishes an aesthetic ideal for men in general and so becomes a fully grown *nanshoku-ka*' (121). This is an aestheticised version of Freud's account of the narcissistic genesis of homosexual object-choice (Freud 7: 145n) which is also described by Takahashi in the *Ningen tankyū* advice column mentioned above. After his first contact with the gay subculture, Yūichi is described as becoming gradually more obsessed with

his own appearance and convinced of his own beauty. By the time of the gay party in Ōiso that is the subject of the twelfth and thirteenth chapters of the novel, Yūichi's narcissism is taken as self-evident, so that it seems natural that he is attracted to a boy at the party because of his resemblance to him. This is precisely the mechanism described in Takahashi's advice column as producing homosexuality, as the narcissist becomes sexually attracted to those most like him. When Count Kaburagi later seduces Yūichi at the same party, his eloquent flattery is described as transforming him into a mirror that reflected Yūichi (223). Then:

His psyche dozed upon another psyche and, without the intervention of any sensual power, Yūichi's psyche merged with the psyche of another Yūichi that was already half duplicating his own. Yūichi's face touched Yūichi's face, beautiful eyebrows touched beautiful eyebrows. The youth's dreamily half-opened lips were covered by his own beautiful lips as he had imagined them to himself. (225-6)

Although we know that Count Kaburagi is in no way physically attractive, Yūichi's experience of being seduced by him is rendered beautiful by his sense that it is his own beauty that is seducing him.

However, against the Freudian account, the narrative represents narcissism as leading not just to homosexuality, but to heterosexual desire as well. When Yūichi first gets close to Mrs. Kaburagi, dancing with her at a charity ball in accordance with Shunsuke's instructions, his first emotion is pleasure at having succeeded in the test (set by Shunsuke) of luring her; but his pleasure is so great that 'that day he almost suspected that he was in love with Mrs. Kaburagi' (104). Although the passage is contradictory, Yūichi appears to mistake his concern for himself for love of Mrs. Kaburagi. In other words, so great is his satisfaction with his performance as a heterosexual lover that he falls in love with this image of himself, but interprets this as love for the actual viewer of the performance – Mrs. Kaburagi. Later, after she has discovered Yūichi's

sexual relationship with her husband, she sends him an elegant letter which leads him to the conviction that he *is* in love with her. However, subjected to Shunsuke's scorn for the notion, Yūichi relinquishes the idea, recognizing his mistake in precisely these terms. He thinks to himself: 'No, it cannot be that I am in love with Mrs. Kaburagi after all. That's right. It was perhaps rather that I fell in love with a second me that was so loved by her, a young man too beautiful to exist in this world' (319). So while the Freudian concept of narcissism is important to the understanding of Yūichi's sexuality, it is not one that Mishima naively projected onto his character, but one that he knowingly played with, suggesting ironically that a young man's narcissistic awareness of his own beauty can lead not necessarily to a homosexuality that is thus figured as perverted, but also to a mistaken heterosexual desire.

DESIRE AND WHOLENESS

This rejection of the mechanistic view of sexual desire to which psychoanalysis might lead matches Mishima's criticism of its influence in 'Nudes and Clothing' (*Ratai to ishō*, 1958), a series of critical essays and personal thoughts published in the form of a diary. Commenting on a suggestive joke made to him over dinner by a woman novelist, he notes how, since the development of psychoanalysis, the fear of one's remarks being taken to reveal some unconscious desire leads people to make the most exhibitionistic sexual jokes in order to give the impression that nothing else could lie behind them. We are, he says, unable to allow the unconscious force of sexual desire to animate our lives, because we insist on wrenching it out of the unconscious into the conscious and so have turned sexual desire into a function, an

organ.

Sexual desire, thus brought into consciousness, is no longer suitable for sublimation, but has been entirely specialized, so that the uncomfortable feeling we have when we are moved by it is simply the discomfort of the whole being moved by the part. In other words, quite against the intent of psychoanalysis (if there is such a thing), the holistic feeling of sexual excitement has been lost and the diagnosis of modern sexual hysteria is largely to be found in this discomfort. That is to say, whereas in the ancient world sexual excitement led to a return to a sense of wholeness, that has now been cut off. (MZ 30: 106)

The identification of aspects of sexual desire as symptomatic of particular perversions, Mishima seems to suggest, cuts us off from the potential of that desire to bring a sense of wholeness (*zentaikan*) and itself leads to the hysterical effects of sexual repression.

Mishima's clearest statement of his rejection of a single, normative model for sexual desire is perhaps to be found in one of his late essays, 'All Japanese Are Perverse' (1968). He writes that sexual relationships can be divided into three types: heterosexual, homosexual and sado-masochistic. These are nuanced, but each has a kernel that cannot be explained by analogy with one of the other two, each corresponding to one of the three fundamental types of human relationship: social order based on reproduction, the fighting group based on camaraderie, and the relation of oppressor to oppressed based on the will to power. On the idea of perversions, he draws on the ideas of the existential psychologist Ludwig Binswanger (1881-1966), who argued that all perversions aim for the same thing, which is the loss of self and union with the wholeness of the universe (MZ 35). The idea that sexual desire can properly lead to a sense of wholeness and should not be forced into normative regimes of truth appears to have been a consistent one for Mishima. The search for that sense of wholeness and the problematic relationship between desire and truth is dramatized in his novel *Music* (*Ongaku*,

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1964), one of the last of his 'entertainment' novels.

Subtitled 'A Case Study of Frigidity in a Woman Under Psychoanalysis', *Music* foregrounds its problematization of the idea of 'truth' in relation to sexual desire with a 'publisher's foreword' that tells us the names have been changed but the story is 'absolutely based on fact' (MZ 11: 8) and ending with a list of works (by Freud and Erich Fromm, among others) for further reference. The ironic nature of this insistence on truth becomes clear from the progress of the narrative. Told by the analyst Dr. Shiomi, it relates the history and analysis of a young office worker, Reiko, who at first says she has been referred to him because of physical sickness and lack of appetite. Engaged to a second cousin in the countryside, but in a sexual relationship with the most popular young man in her office, Ryūichi, she says she is fearful for her future with Ryūichi because of her own unattractiveness and the fact that her previous sexual experience was when she was raped by her cousin/fiancé. She also says that she cannot hear music. Pressed for an explanation, she says that when, for example, she listens to a radio play she hears the words but simply cannot hear the background music (17). Dr. Shiomi immediately alerts the reader to his doubts about Reiko's story and what ensues is a gradual discovery by the analyst of the truth behind it. However, this discovery is, for the most part, not the result of clinical analysis but cumulative confessions by Reiko, along with fortuitous discoveries and the intervention of her boyfriend, Ryūichi. As her story unfolds, Dr. Shiomi also appears to be drawn personally into it, to the consternation of his girlfriend, Akemi, who works as his assistant. After Akemi has told him she is made uncomfortable by Reiko, he is disturbed during sex with Akemi by the thought that he can no longer hear the music on the record player;

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before realizing that he had not put a record on, and that there is not even a record player in the room (37). Far from discovering the truth in his patient and effecting a cure, the doctor appears at this stage to be affected by his patient and himself becoming uncertain of the nature of reality.

The first aspect of truth to be revealed by Reiko is that her inability to hear music was not true as a literal statement, but she had not been able to say that she was unable to experience orgasm. Ryūichi subsequently confronts Dr. Shiomi with Reiko's diary, which describes the doctor kissing and touching her on the couch during analysis, but he is contrite when the analyst shows him his notes on Reiko and letters from her indicating the true situation. Reiko presents to Dr. Shiomi various dreams and experiences that appear to be false, but she also reveals that when she was a child her elder brother climbed into her bed and touched her. Ryūichi, she says, looked just like her brother when she first met him and so sleeping with him has been something she cannot resist, but feels she should not do.

A final aspect of the truth that Reiko reveals is that it was not her cousin who raped her, but her brother, in front of his girlfriend. Seeing the possibility of a resolution, Dr. Shiomi brings Reiko into a confrontation with her brother. He realizes from a slip of the tongue made by Reiko that she had idolized the rape by her brother and her frigidity had developed from an unconscious wish to keep her womb 'free' for him. Seeing her brother, now living in degradation with his wife and child in the Sanya slum, Reiko realizes the impossibility of this and a cure is effected. She marries Ryūichi six months later.

At one level, the analysis is successful and a conventional marriage is enabled. However,

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several experiences seem to bring Reiko true happiness and the sense of wholeness that Mishima said had been denied to us in the post-Freudian world. The first is when, part way through the analysis, the hated cousin/fiancé dies from cancer. Returning home to look after him on his deathbed, she finds her feelings for him are completely changed and, like Etsuko in *Thirst for Love*, finds herself exalted in the presence of another's suffering:

'And then, Doctor, can you imagine! Suddenly I heard *music*. Inside my body, that music that I had longed for. The music didn't stop straight away, but overflowed like a spring and moistened my dried up insides. Not in my ears, but in my body... Doctor, can such unbelievable things happen? I heard that music in my body, with a feeling of indescribable joy.' (80)

Just as in *Thirst for Love*, Reiko here would be expected to be suffering the unexpressed trauma of a loved one's death, but rather than suppressed pain she is overwhelmed by unanticipated physical pleasure. Sexual excitement seems to be bringing her the desired sense of wholeness.

Reiko's second experience of joy is with a boy she meets at the seaside. She finds him contemplating suicide and he reveals this is because he is impotent. She tells him that she is, too, and her apparent pride in the fact dissuades him from his course. They begin a relationship which involves sleeping together without having sex and this seems to be the perfect situation for her, as she has reestablished the relationship with her dying cousin by having a suffering young man physically dependent on her. She ends the relationship with the boy when he overcomes his impotence. The third source of wholeness for Reiko is her imaginary reconstruction of her rape by her brother. In her memory, she has turned the experience into a kind of sacred rite, finding a symbol of love in the depravity and picturing the event as having taken place in something like a shrine. Dr. Shiomi's realization is this: 'Reiko had then surely felt, through this animalistic act, some sacred, inviolable essence hidden within the rites of

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human sexuality and the kindness of love' (172).

So overwhelming are these experiences (real and imaginary) of joy that they throw into doubt the conventional ending and the success of Reiko's 'cure'. They suggest, rather, the truth of Dr. Shiomi's advice at the beginning of the novel: 'In the world of sex, there is no such thing as happiness to suit all tastes. The reader should be careful to bear that in mind' (13).

One should be equally careful of the truth that one seeks in Mishima's texts in general. He both used and undermined in his fiction the various discursive formations for uncovering the truth about sex and any reader who attempts to use fixed models of sexual desire to pin Mishima down is liable to find those models already marked in the text. In relation to psychoanalysis in particular, what is most interesting is the resistance to its account of sexuality that we find in Mishima's fiction – an ambivalence towards Freud's ideas, as well as a fascination with them. This suggests that to use Mishima's texts as a tool to uncover truths about the author's psychology is bound to be deceptive. When we attempt to put Mishima-the-analysand on the analyst's couch and interpret the products of his imagination, we find only that Mishima-the-analyst has already written the case notes for us.

Three

Pulp Fiction

Mishima's depictions of desire and sexuality can be seen to depend on, and to resist or interact with, a number of discourses of desire, including the literary precedents offered by earlier Japanese fiction and the wider projects of sexology and psychoanalysis. One way of seeing these discourses in relation to Mishima is as sources of ideas about desire that he was able to make use of in his narratives. Another source of ideas, which has already been mentioned in passing, is popular journalism, and Mishima's relationship to such a commercial form of publication raises questions of Mishima's own intentions as a writer and the interplay between self-expression and an author's strategy for commercial success. In this case there are two kinds of publications in particular that merit investigation. Firstly, the *kasutori zasshi* (pulp magazines) of the Occupation period brought a wide range of depictions of sexual desire to the public in the late 1940s and early 1950s and are therefore worth considering in the context of Mishima's fiction of this period, especially *Confessions of a Mask*, which shares a number of its themes and images with them. Secondly, women's magazines of the 1950s and 1960s provide a number of interesting comparisons with Mishima's fiction of the mid-1950s onwards, in which the focus on same-sex desire found in *Confessions of a Mask* and *Forbidden Colours*, as well as some shorter fiction, is replaced by a frequent concentration on women's desire for

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men. While these two sets of publications are very different, they stand in a similar relation to Mishima's fiction, in that each is evidence of a particular discourse on desire circulating among the Japanese reading public, or parts thereof, and of a market for certain ways of depicting desire. In both cases it will be seen that Mishima's own depictions of desire reflect their contemporary background but also differ in significant ways from it.

PULP, FLESH AND DECADENCE

The immediate postwar period in Japan saw a new flowering of cultural activity, both high and low, in the ruins. John W. Dower describes the renewed flourishing of Japanese culture in spite of the exhaustion that weighed on the country in the late 1940s: 'A veritable torrent of diverse publications accompanied the lifting of the old police-state restrictions on free expression. The film industry prospered. Radio became lively again. Intellectuals ran on as if there were no tomorrow. New formulations of "culture" were debated alongside new models of "love," both carnal and pure. "Decadence" itself emerged as a provocative challenge to old orthodoxies' (Dower 1999: 119-20). This 'decadence' is, of course, most recognizable in literary terms from Sakaguchi Ango's essay 'On Decadence' (*Darakuron*, 1946) and the writings of Ango and other *burai-ha* writers generally. The exploration of the carnal is found most obviously in the genre of *nikutai shōsetsu* or *nikutai no bungaku* (literature of the flesh) represented by Tamura Taijirō (1911-83). However, the decadence celebrated in such 'high' cultural production was reflected in the plethora of less literary publications that came to be known as *kasutori zasshi*. These

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shared with the literary writings of Ango and others the enthusiastic exploration of all things carnal, and especially the further reaches of physical pleasure. While the *burai-ha* writers and their works were associated with a range of socially unacceptable behaviour, including drug-taking, drunkenness and adultery, the *kasutori zasshi* focused on the sexual.

Even a cursory examination of the contents of these magazines, their fascination with sexual behaviour and sexual imagery, and in particular the forms of sexuality that were depicted in them, should suggest that the sexual fantasies narrated in *Confessions of a Mask* are less idiosyncratic and less surprising than they perhaps now seem. Here it is helpful to separate the form taken by these sexual fantasies – sadistic violence – from the (male) gender of the narrator's objects of desire. This distinction is worth stressing, because the description of the narrator of *Confessions of a Mask* as a 'sadistic homosexual' has become a given in criticism, as if this were an immediately recognizable category. As McLelland's description of Japan's postwar 'perverse culture' makes clear, 'same-sex object choice was not the defining characteristic of queer desire in the perverse press,' which was a varied basket of sexual behaviours. The concept of *hentai seiyoku* (perverse desire) 'constituted a perverse paradigm that far exceeded homosexuality' (McLelland 2000: 72). The separation of sadism from same-sex desire is confirmed by Mishima's return to sadistic fantasy in his novella 'The Locked Room' (*Kagi no kakaru heya*, 1954), in which the cruelties described are inflicted by men on women, and it is also worth bearing in mind Mishima's later distinction, in 'All Japanese Are Perverse', of three fundamental patterns for sexual desire: heterosexual, homosexual and sado-masochistic (see the preceding chapter).

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We should at least distinguish two aspects of the narrator's fantasy in *Confessions of a Mask*: the aspect of same-sex object choice, in that they focus on boys, and the aspect of sadism, in that they imagine inflicting violence. The comparison between *Confessions of a Mask* and *kasutori zasshi* should also help to remedy another tendency of criticism on Mishima: the inability to look directly at the sexual fantasy that it identifies as the outstanding characteristic of the novel. In dealing with this area, criticism too often directs our gaze upwards and outwards to abstractions such as nihilism, or downwards and inwards to the author's own psychology. Starrs' treatment of Mishima combines both of these diversions:

Certainly it seems relevant to speculate, for instance, on the psychological origins of Mishima's nihilism. Taking a clue from *Confessions*, we might point to his unusual childhood, during which he was forcibly cut off from his mother's love and jealously over-protected by his neurotic and dictatorial grandmother, who taught him to fear the outside world. If psychoanalytically inclined, no doubt we would find here the roots of his narcissism, his sadomasochistic homosexuality and his paranoia, each of which, in turn, fed into his nihilism. (Starrs: 91)

Piven is nothing if not psychoanalytically inclined, showing in his recent study that even now the urge to analyze Mishima through (especially) *Confessions of a Mask* has not been satisfied:

After 15 years of ... poring over texts streaming with innumerable fantasies of raping and killing young beautiful boys, of scenes of masturbating to images of slain men ... my question is why no one has yet penned a thorough exploration of Mishima's psyche. (Piven: 2-3)

The reference can only be to *Confessions of a Mask*, but this is a curiously inaccurate description of the text, in which the fantasies of killing young beautiful boys are by no means innumerable (there is precisely one passage describing this) and there is no mention of rape at all. An accurate comparison of what is actually in Mishima's novel and what was to be read in

the *kasutori zasshi* at the time might help to dispel such tumescent misremembering of Mishima's text. Piven goes on to ask: 'Is it so obvious why Mishima might imagine scenes of homosexual rape, voyeurism, murder, or sexualization of violence?' (3) This question is best answered by looking at where else scenes of voyeurism, murder and sexualized violence were to be found when Mishima imagined them.

One problem with the kind of criticism quoted above is its concentration on only what appear (to the critic) the most scandalous aspects of the text. Erasing this intrinsically normative distinction, we can identify five key aspects of the narration of sexuality and sexual desire/behaviour in *Confessions of a Mask*: sadism, masturbation, kissing, inversion (as a model for the narrator's sexuality) and confession itself as a form for narrating sexual desire. (The attention to masturbation and the use of the concept of inversion have been discussed in the preceding chapter.) Each of these was also to be found as an aspect of writing on sexual desire in the *kasutori zasshi* and while this can be taken simply as further evidence of the prevalence of sexological ideas in circulation in postwar Japan, two of these aspects in particular stand out as constructs largely of popular culture. Sadism and kissing – at opposite ends of the sexual spectrum if viewed through a normative lens – have a particular salience in the popular cultural discourse on sexual desire in 1940s Japan and a comparison of *Confessions of a Mask* with texts from the magazines shows how close it is to them.

THIRST FOR BLOOD

Sadism was among the concepts introduced to the reading public by the sexology magazines of the 1920s, in whose footsteps the *kasutori zasshi* followed to a large extent, and it is worth including the earlier publications in this consideration. First published in 1922, *Hentai seiyoku* (Perverse Desire) enjoyed considerable popularity until its banning in 1932. The first two editions of the magazine, published in May and July 1922, carried a two-part 'Outline of Perverse Desires' (*'Hentai seiyoku yōsetsu'*), one of which is sadism, or *gyakutaisei inranshō*. Two later unattributed articles in *Hentai seiyoku* gave a matter-of-fact account of sadism and cannibalism. '*Zajisumusu no henkeishō*' ('The Varieties of Sadism') in the July 1923 edition describes sadism as 'a perverse desire which derives sexual pleasure from engaging in cruel behaviour, by whipping the opposite sex, spitting in the face, strangulation, pulling the hair, wounding with weapons and otherwise inflicting violence on the opposite sex, and in extreme cases people may kill and dismember the opposite sex, cut open the muscles, cut out the internal organs and eat them' (13). (The 'Outline of Perverse Desires' defines sadism in almost exactly the same terms.) It goes on to note that this need not be directed against the opposite sex, but may be inflicted on the same sex as well. The article concentrates heavily on examples from Chinese, Japanese and European history, enumerating the elaborate methods of killing enjoyed by King Zhou of Shang, describing Toyotomi Hidetsugu's methods of murdering prisoners and singling out the Roman emperors Tiberius and Nero and the fifteenth century French general Gilles de Rais. Quoting from the *Nihon Seikyōshi* (the 1880 Japanese translation of Jean Classet's 1696 *L'Histoire de l'Église du Japon*), it describes how Toyotomi Hidetsugu set

up a place of execution 'and put a three-legged chopping block in the middle of it, and would lie criminals on this and took pleasure in cutting them up; sometimes he would stand them up and slice them in two, but what he enjoyed most was severing the criminals' limbs one by one' (15).

'*Seiyoku tōsaku ni yoru kuibito*' ('Cannibalism Due to Sexual Inversion') appeared in the June 1924 edition of *Hentai seiyoku* and states that while cannibalism may occur because of hunger or superstition, among other reasons, it is not rare for it to be due to sexual inversion (270). The vocabulary should be noted here: the author discusses cannibalism as a sexual phenomenon arising from 'inversion' (*tōsaku*) irrespective of the gender of eater and victim. This should warn us that when the narrator of *Confessions* describes himself as an 'invert' he is not simply using an alternative word for 'homosexual'. The article introduces three cases of killing and dismembering from Krafft-Ebing's *Psychopathia Sexualis*, principally that of Vincenz Verzeni, whose physiology and family history of cretinism is relayed from Krafft-Ebing along with the details of his crimes. Among the details given are Verzeni's having cut open and eaten parts of his victims and drunk their blood, his constant masturbation even when in prison, his enjoyment of killing irrespective of age or beauty of the victim and the fact that he derived sexual pleasure simply from the killing and did not sexually assault his victims at all (272-3).

While *Hentai seiyoku* and other magazines (such as *Hanzai kagaku*) introduced sadism as one of a range of sexual perversions in the 1920s and 30s, the postwar *kasutori zasshi* carried on the 'popularization' of perverse desire in a more titillating vein after 1945. Among the best known of the *kasutori zasshi*, and one of the first to go into publication, was *Ryōki* (Curiosity Hunting), the first edition of which appeared in October 1946. As Yamamoto Akira explains,

the phrase *ryōki shumi* was often used by Edogawa Ranpo in the sense of a taste for the unusual and mysterious, a taste illustrated by the stories discussed in the first chapter of this study. However, in the postwar period *ryōki* came to be synonymous with the erotic, and this change of meaning was largely down to the influence of the magazine itself (Yamamoto: 116). The third edition (from January 1947) included '*Wakai mazohisuto no kokuhaku*' ('Confessions of a Young Masochist') under the name of M.K. It purports to retell the 'confession', sent in 'some time ago' of a student who derived sexual gratification from being humiliated and tortured by women. His first experience was when he broke in to the house of a famous actress, via the lavatory, and contrived to be caught and punished (at his request) by her and her two maids. They stripped the young man naked and teased him by telling him to 'be a horse, be a toilet, be a seat (*zabuton*)' for them and 'finally he was cut with a knife in sixteen places' (M.K.: 11). His other experiences include being tied to a tree by three women, who cut tattoos into him with a fountain pen, whip him, urinate on him and spit in his mouth. He is said to have become the 'slave' of a group of nurses who, among other things, tie him upside down and cut a cross into his thigh before stitching it up again 'for practice.' His greatest fantasy, described as 'an extreme delusion' (*kyokutan-na mōsō*), was to be 'cut up, made into *ikizukuri*, have tasty pieces of flesh made into *sashimi* and dipped in *sanbaizu* and *miso*, or made into *sukiyaki*, and eaten by mistresses and beautiful princesses.'

Two aspects of 'M.K.'s' story differ from anything described in *Confessions of a Mask*: the confession is told from the passive side of the sadomasochistic fantasy rather than the active side; and the active role is played by women. What also distinguishes M.K.'s story from

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Confessions is that for M.K. the infliction of pain is combined with conventional (that is to say, non-sadistic) sexual activity, for while torturing him they also force him to perform oral sex on them, whereas Kōchan's fantasies do not involve any kind of sexual assault in this sense. To this extent, Kōchan's fantasies are closer to the definitions of sadism in the *Hentai seiyoku* articles, which make it explicit that the sexual pleasure derives from the torture and killing itself, not from a combination of this with sexual assault. In other respects, though, there is a clear resemblance in M.K.'s story to the fantasies of Mishima's narrator. The obvious objection might be that Kōchan's fantasies are homosexual, whereas those of 'M.K.' are heterosexual, but this would be to impose the modern Western paradigm of sexual desire – where the gender of object-choice overrides all other distinctions – inappropriately. As McLelland points out, Japanese 'perverse' magazines did not distinguish between hetero- and homosexual perversities until at least the 1960s (McLelland: 128). In the *kasutori zasshi*, discussions of same-sex desire appear relatively frequently alongside a full range of other forms of 'perverse' desire, often subsumed into the category of *sei fūzoku* (sexual customs). The articles published in *Hentai seiyoku* had referred to the victim/object mostly as 'the opposite sex' (*isei*) but explicitly mentioned the possibility that torture of the same sex was also possible.

Mishima's story 'The Locked Room' also describes sadomasochistic fantasy from the active side, but with the opposite sex as the passive victims of the violence. As in *Confessions of a Mask*, the sadistic fantasy remains in the realm of imagination and is not realized, but it overlaps with the protagonist's life. Kazuo, a young man working in the Ministry of Finance in 1948 has had an affair with a married woman, Kiriko, who has had a seizure while they were

having sex and died. On several occasions he visits Kiriko's house after her death, where he meets her nine year-old daughter, Fusako, who takes him into the same room where he used to make love to Kiriko. On the first occasion, Fusako locks the door, 'because Mummy always used to lock it, didn't she?' (MZ 19: 227). She then sits on Kazuo's lap and kisses him, at which point he gets an erection and moves her from his lap. Kazuo later has one of several dreams about visiting a 'Bar of the Covenant', which he realizes is a bar for sadists when he is given a glass of 'blood wine' (*chizake*), which another of the men drinking there explains: 'It's a superior alcohol, made by refining [blood] squeezed from the bodies of young girls' (245). One of the men is a dyer, whose new fabrics are dyed with the blood and guts of women. Another finds new ways to execute women, one of which is to tattoo them with a pin-stripe suit, then insert a handkerchief and compact into 'pockets' cut into their flesh. When they ask Kazuo for a story, he says that he raped a nine year-old girl and in so doing split her and she bled to death as a result, to which the men respond by laughing: 'Is that all?' (248). The similarities between these men's fantasies and Kōchan's in *Confessions of a Mask* (in particular the emphasis on blood and on cutting into bodies) again make it clear that the sadistic form of fantasy is something separate from the same-sex object choice.

The fourth edition of *Ryōki*, published in May 1947, contains another examination of sadistic fantasy, by the artist Itō Seiu (recognized in Japan as something of a pioneer in the art of bondage), focusing on the tying up and torture of women, '*Shiitageraretaru Nihon fujin*' ('Oppressed Women of Japan'). Itō tells of an acquaintance of his, whom he names as 'Nihei Kyūsuke' and describes as 'a so-called pervert' (*iwayuru hentaiseiyokusha*) whose sexual tastes

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evolved from a fascination with pregnant women to dripping candle wax onto naked women and on to bondage and torture. His tastes are said to have developed from an antiquarian interest in Tokugawa illustrated books depicting the tying up and torturing of women, with such scenes as 'cutting open wives' bellies and removing their children, taking pleasure in stripping women naked and nailing them to a door; or in arming several dozen beautiful women with spears and halberds and swords, splitting them into east and west teams and having them cut each other up and die by stabbing each other, or bandits burying beauties alive, or taking pleasure in knocking the heads off six Jizō statues and replacing them with the heads of beauties' (Itō: 5). We are told that Nihei was much given to masturbating over such images.

The sadistic fantasy within *Confessions of a Mask* has three prominent appearances. Firstly, Kōchan's first orgasm over the reproduction of Guido Reni's *St Sebastian* with its image of the young saint pierced by arrows. Secondly, the extended treatment that begins with the idea of the 'murder theatre' (*satsujin gekijō*) and is identified as beginning in his fourth year at middle school. Thirdly, in the final scene of the novel, where he imagines a young man being killed in a street fight. All of these passages involve the cutting of a young man's flesh, as does the fantasy of 'M.K.' In the longest passage, in the middle of the novel, the narrator tells how the description of the Coliseum in *Quo Vadis* had suggested to him the idea of a murder theatre. In this theatre of the boy's imagination, young Roman gladiators are killed by all manner of execution. However 'devices for torture and gallows for hanging were avoided, because the blood would not have been visible' (MZ 1: 242). Other tools of his fantasy are drills and 'an execution device on which a an execution frame was fixed to one end of a rail and from the other end a thick

board, into which umpteen daggers were set in the shape of a person, would come sliding down.' The variety of tortures, and the gladiatorial setting, clearly recall the suffering inflicted on women by Itō's acquaintance Nihei. For Kōchan, as for Nihei, his sadistic tastes can be said to have an antiquarian origin. However they also recall the descriptions of sadistic behaviour by historical rulers such as Toyotomi Hidetsugu and the Roman emperors elaborated in the *Hentai seiyoku* articles on sadism. The other historical personage named in this article, Gilles de Rais, is also mentioned by Mishima in relation to cruelty, when he names him in connection with the picture of Joan of Arc that disturbs him as a child (184). The culmination of this set of fantasies involves a classmate of Kōchan, 'a boy who was skilled at swimming and had an unusually good body' (243). At a banquet, this boy is strangled by a cook, stripped and tied up by the cook and his assistants, who then hand the narrator a carving knife and fork. 'I stuck the fork in his heart. A fountain of blood hit me right in the face. With the knife in my right hand I started cutting the flesh off his chest gradually, in thin slices...' (246). Here, in the tying up of a young man and the slicing of his flesh for cannibalistic consumption, the narrator of *Confessions of a Mask* enacts exactly the same fantasy as 'M.K.' wishes upon himself.

Apart from the far more literary tone and the fineness of Mishima's description (whereas the masochist's confession in the *Ryōki* article is plainly told), a key difference between the two is the focus of the fantasist's attention. For the writer of 'M.K.'s' confessions, it is firmly upon the aspect of degradation, mentioning several times his willingness to ingest various of the women's bodily excreta, whereas for Kōchan it is devoted to the spectacle of blood. (In Itō Seiu's article, the focus is on bondage, which also plays a minor role in Kōchan's fantasy.) While he

attempts to 'explain' his fascination with blood as a result of his childhood anaemia (itself, he suspects, the result of too much indulgence in his 'bad habit' of masturbation), the gushing of blood from youthful flesh itself appears to be an enervating, almost ennobling experience. He describes how 'my *joie de vivre* blazed up from some deep place and finally raised a shout and I responded to that shout' (242). When he imagines the youth seen in the dancehall, in the final scene of the novel, killed in a fight, he thinks of a sharp dagger piercing the young man's torso through his belly band. 'Of that filthy belly band coloured beautifully by the tide of blood' (362). Placed in this context, Mishima can be seen to be taking familiar elements from the titillating products of the popular magazines and giving them an aesthetic turn, selling *kasutori* fantasy to a literary audience.

One further distinguishing feature is that both 'M.K.' and Itō's acquaintance Nihei are described as actually enacting the sadomasochistic scenes, whereas Kōchan's fantasies are only that and are not described as being realized within his real life, which is, in its outward appearance, quite blameless, as is that of Kazuo, the Ministry of Finance bureaucrat in 'The Locked Room'. Nevertheless, although 'M.K.' is reported to have experienced sadistic torture, the cutting and eating of his flesh is described only as his fantasy and, in any case, the whole 'confession' functions in the context of the magazine as a fantasy. At a purely textual level, the description of Kōchan's sadistic desires is realized in far more vivid detail than that of 'M.K.'s' experiences and fantasies.

Two examples from the *kasutori* magazines are perhaps not enough to show that Mishima's depiction of sadistic desire was in any sense mainstream at the time of its composition.

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However, in the context of *kasutori* publishing, sadism merges into the wide variety of perverse desires available for consumption and in this wider sense perversity was the subject of almost every article published in *Ryōki* and its many competitor publications, such as *Riberaru* (Liberal), *Dekameron*, *Sei Bunka* (Sex Culture), *Sei Chishiki* (Sexual Knowledge) or *Hanzai Yomimono* (Crime Stories). Famous for their cover images of naked women, these magazines, of which many dozens appeared and disappeared during the Occupation period, had the *display of desire* as their foremost concern – and main selling point.

That the depiction of sadistic desire was part of the cultural mainstream in late 1940s Japan is, however, suggested by the success of works by writers such as Tamura Taijirō. In particular, his novel *Nikutai no mon* ('Gate of Flesh,' 1947) was so popular that it was adapted into a stage play which opened in theatres all over Tokyo and also into a film (which was itself successful enough to inspire three remakes in subsequent decades). The narrative of *Nikutai no mon* features three scenes of violence, mostly directed at young women. A gang, or family, of five prostitutes in the ruins of Tokyo immediately after the end of the Pacific war are described as living like wild animals, but keeping to their own code of behaviour, of which the most important rule is not to have sex with a man for free. After they are joined in their bombed out basement by a young ex-soldier on the run from the police, one of the women is discovered to be having an affair with a man. The other women strip her naked, tie her up and beat her. Her punishment appears to be on the verge of more extreme violence when one of them produces a razor, but the man, Ibuki, prevents things from going further. Some days later Ibuki steals a bull, which he and the women slaughter in a graphic scene which fulfils the promise of bloodshed

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that the earlier scene made. Finally, another of the women sleeps with Ibuki after a drunken party at which they have eaten the meat from the slaughtered bull. When the other women discover what she has done, she, too, is tied up naked and is then hung from the ceiling by her wrists, losing consciousness as the story ends.

Why Tamura's stories sold so well at the time, producing the vogue for 'flesh' literature, is clearly a question that implicates the Japanese literary response to the war and its aftermath. The extremes of physical experience and suffering had an obvious relevance and literary accounts of the war itself from this period also often concentrated on the physical degradation of the Japanese soldier, including instances of cannibalism, most notably in Ōoka Shōhei's (1909-88) *Nobi (Fires on the Plain)*, 1952). In this context, Mishima's descriptions of physical agony, of spurting blood, of binding, cutting and eating human flesh may shock, but should not surprise. What Mishima achieved in *Confessions of a Mask* was to combine popular images of sexualized violence with another popular figure, that of the *bishōnen*, the beautiful youth, who becomes the victim in an aesthetically enhanced version of the *kasutori* stories. In 'The Locked Room' he integrated these images into a portrayal of an outwardly conventional life, suggesting the pervasiveness of perverse desire insisted upon in the *kasutori* magazines and suggesting also that perverse fantasy threatens to seep into reality.

HOW TO KISS

Critical accounts of *Confessions of a Mask* often point to the different focuses of the first and

second halves of the novel – the second having a heterosexual focus on the narrator's relationship with Sonoko in place of the homosexual attraction to other schoolboys in the first half. However another way of distinguishing the different parts of the novel is in terms of the physical aspect of the narrator's sexual desire: whereas in the first it is on sadistic violence, in the second it is on the act of kissing. Although these two aspects of desire might seem to present a very strong contrast, they were both focuses of the investigation of desire and perversity in the *kasutori zasshi*. To treat sadism and kissing as two forms of perverse desire is justifiable both in principle and historically. As Freud points out, kissing is a deviation from the 'normal sexual aim' and so essentially a perversion: 'the kiss, one particular contact of this kind [i.e. not involving genital contact], between the mucous membrane of the lips of the two people concerned, is held in high sexual esteem among many nations ... in spite of the fact that the parts of the body involved do not form part of the sexual apparatus but constitute the entrance to the digestive tract' (Freud: 150). Historically, it should be noted that the kiss was by no means considered as necessarily 'normal' or acceptable in pre-1945 Japan and the change in its cultural meaning at this time gave it great significance.

Matsumoto Tōru recognizes the importance of the kiss as an important topos in Mishima's fiction. He notes its significance in *Spring Snow*, suggesting that the realization of love comes for Kiyoaki when he kisses Satoko in the rickshaw when they go snow viewing.

That the kiss held an exceptionally great meaning for Mishima will be clear if one reads *Confessions of a Mask*. He treats the kiss that I believe Mishima himself exchanged in real life at Karuizawa in mid-June 1945, two months before the end of the war, and he deals with the same experience before *Confessions of a Mask* in his short story 'Preparations for the Night' (*Yoru no shitaku*) and his first

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novel *Thieves* (*Tōzoku*), taking it up repeatedly thereafter in *The Wavering of Virtue* (*Bitoku no yoromeki*) and elsewhere. (Matsumoto 2005: 18)

Matsumoto links the relationship with Sonoko to the relationships described in *Preparations for the Night* (1947) and *Thieves* (1947-48), finding the basis for all three in Mishima's own life, but in so doing he reduces the author's work to a problem to be resolved in the light of his personal history and psychology: 'This kiss ... was a decisive experience in Mishima's youth and it is no exaggeration to say that how to unravel [this problem] became his main theme throughout his life' (83). By focusing on Mishima's own life, Matsumoto misses the significance of the kiss in discursive terms.

The failed relationship with Sonoko dominates the second half of *Confessions of a Mask* but it appears to be the narrator's desperate attempt to submit to social norms. Two points stand out in the description of his feelings for Sonoko. Firstly, while he never finally concludes that they are not genuine, they are never graced with the literary, artistic or mythological associations that mediate and authorize his same-sex desire. Secondly, they never seem to have the overtly sexual nature of his other fantasies. While we know what physical features of boys and men arouse his masturbatory fantasies and what sadistic tortures fuel them, the only activity that is mentioned in respect of Sonoko is kissing. The only remotely sexual encounter that he achieves in the course of the novel is kissing his distant cousin Chieko and, eventually, Sonoko, as well as a prostitute (whom he only kisses, by touching tongues). It can be said that his exploration of the possibility for him of heterosexual desire is expressed solely in terms of the kiss, which becomes for him an obsession: 'Thus the kiss became an *idée fixe* for me' (MZ 1:

259). And later: 'My obsession with kissing eventually attached itself to a single pair of lips. (...) As I have already said, although it was not desire or anything of the sort, I desperately tried to believe that it was desire' (262).

Here we might see the kiss as an obvious and natural focus of the narrator's attention and it would be tempting to assume that we know a priori what the significance of this is. However, its presence in *Confessions of a Mask* may also be read against what Yamamoto has described as the 'debate over kissing' (Yamamoto: 54). The kiss can be said to have come to prominence for the Japanese viewing and reading public after 1945. Kissing in public was, indeed, an offence from the early 1920s until 1945. The first American film to be imported after the end of the war, *Spring Parade* (1940) starring Deanna Durbin, was shown with kissing scenes that had been cut when it was shown in Japan before the outbreak of war with the United States. When Japanese film studios restarted full production in 1946, kissing scenes appeared for the first time. 'Kissing films' (*seppun eiga*) became a matter of public debate, and in August 1946 the *Yomiuri Shinbun* announced a readers' poll on the subject, to which respondents are reported to have been 27% in favour and 73% against the phenomenon (Yamamoto: 58). The first film to show a kiss was Shōchiku's *Hatachi no Seishun* (Youth at Twenty), but since the consensus was that it was unhygienic, subsequent films faked kisses either by dexterous camera angles or by using gauze on the actors' lips (Richie 1991: 223).

The change taking place was not simply the representation of the act of kissing, but also a change in Japanese concepts of sex, separating kissing from sexual intercourse, with which it had previously been linked in the popular imagination. That kissing was represented as sexual

foreplay is clear in Nagai Kafu's novels, for example *Geisha in Rivalry* (*Ude kurabe*, 1917), where the lovers Yoshioka and Komayo, when finally alone, do not kiss until Komayo is naked. The change in the concept is sufficiently great to merit a short cultural history in an article by Saitō Masami in the June 1947 issue of *Ryōki*, 'Sex Lesson: Aspects of Kissing as it Appears in Literature' (*Sei no kōza: bungaku ni arawareta seppun no shosō*), which introduces several kissing scenes from Meiji literature to show how differently it was received at the end of the Meiji era. A 'History of Modern Kissing' in the February 1948 issue of the same magazine notes how kissing has become a 'difficult issue' since the revised penal code under the new constitution allows for kissing in public to be punishable as lewd conduct, while some people explain that it is not a crime as long as it is 'a correct expression of love' (Nakano 1948: 31). The June 1947 issue of *Dekameron* carried an article by Sugita Natsuki entitled 'Research on Kissing' (*Seppun-kō*), which gives an interesting transcultural history of kissing, pondering whether the word *seppun* was invented in the Meiji period, looking at the appearance of kissing in the *Kojiki* and distinguishing the three distinct meanings in Roman culture behind the three different words corresponding to *seppun* in Latin.

The *kasutori* magazines contributed vigorously to the 'debate on kissing', the reasons for opposition to it being chiefly that the Japanese had not traditionally had the habit, that it was unhygienic and that it was indecorous, while those who 'supported' kissing associated its suppression with the postwar bogey of feudalism and unscientific customs (Yamamoto: 58). A liberation of kissing was seen as part of the process of democratization. There were frequent 'how-to-do-it' articles on kissing in the *kasutori* magazines and these were often accompanied

by pro-democracy rhetoric. The July 1946 issue of *Riberaru* carried a short article 'In Praise of Kissing' (*Seppun Raisan*), which places kissing in the context of democracy and liberalism and notes the 'whirlwind of kisses' that cinema and theatre are now presenting. It berates those who would insist on Japan maintaining its own sexual customs (*fūzoku shūkan*) and says that these are a product of 'natural history' ('Seppun raisan': 20). An article entitled 'On Kissing' in the November 1947 edition of *Liebe* ends with this: 'The festering, sore, rotten old social system will come crashing loudly down. Look how new life is catching fire in the shadow of the burnt-out ruins! Now is the time for us to take back our *youth* that has been wounded for so long, under a free blue sky' (quoted in Yamamoto: 64-5).

From these discussions of kissing, several patterns of thought emerge. Firstly, for ordinary women, to allow a man to kiss her was only one step away from surrendering her chastity to him; to this extent, kissing maintained its significance as a sexual act, in spite of its 'democratization' in many of the *kasutori* magazine articles. It still carried enough of an erotic charge for one of the *kasutori* magazines, which decorated its covers with bikini-clad girls, to call itself *Seppun*. Secondly, kissing was something 'spiritual' which, for example, prostitutes reserved for men they loved. In either case, kissing was of great significance. Nevertheless, kissing had certainly come out of the closet as a subject for (seemingly endless) discussion and frank depiction, now that it could be portrayed on stage and screen and its mechanics and etiquette could be explained in print. It was now a kind of socially acceptable perversion, one that could – very democratically – be enjoyed by all.

Given the significance of the kiss in this context, it is not surprising that the first

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suggestion of sexual interest in women on the part of the narrator of *Confessions of a Mask* should be focused on a woman's lips. 'The 'single pair of lips' were the lips of [Nukada's] elder sister, who appeared when I went to visit him' (MZ 1: 263). However, it is clear that he is not genuinely in love with his classmate, Nukada's, sister. That his focus is only on her lips, whereas his attention to boys focuses on various parts of their bodies carefully described, is perhaps meant to suggest that his interest in girls does not extend beyond what he has learnt from popular accounts of kissing. No actual kissing takes place at this point. He later shifts his attention to Sonoko, the sister of another classmate. At this point he is visited one day by his distant cousin, Chieko, when he has come down with a fever while on a daytrip to his family home from the naval arsenal where he has been sent in the last months of the war, and she briefly nurses him that afternoon. During this nursing, she kisses him:

Then a strange, hot breath mingled with my breath and suddenly my lips were stopped up with something heavy and oily. Our teeth made a noise as they clashed. I was afraid to open my eyes and look. After a while she cold hands enveloped my cheeks firmly. (...)

I sat right up and said: 'Again.' We carried on kissing endlessly until the houseboy came back. She kept on saying: 'Just kissing, just kissing.'

I did not know whether there was any carnal feeling in this kiss or not. (...) What was important was that I had become 'a man who has experienced a kiss'. Just like a boy who loves his little sister and, when given some tasty sweets outside immediately thinks 'I'd like my sister to have some,' all the time I was in that embrace with Chieko I was thinking of Sonoko. After that all my thoughts were concentrated on the fantasy of kissing Sonoko. That was the first, and also the most important, miscalculation that I made. (311-12)

The description of Kōchan's much-awaited first kiss with Sonoko reads almost as something from a how-to article in a magazine:

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I was nervous, like a new recruit. There's a grove of trees. The shadow there will do. It's about fifty paces away. At twenty paces I will say something to her. I need to break the tension. For the last thirty paces I should talk about something inconsequential. Fifty paces. At that point I will park my bicycle. Then I will look at the landscape towards the mountains. Then I will put my hand on her shoulder. In a low voice, say something like 'It's like a dream to be able to be here like this, isn't it.' Then she will make some innocent reply. Then I have to tighten my hand on her shoulder and move her body to face me. The guidelines for the kiss are the same as that time with Chieko. (318-9).

Where and when to kiss her, what to say, how to position themselves – all these are elements of the technique of kissing disseminated by magazine articles. However, for the narrator it is only a technique devoid of desire. Kōchan has grasped the technique but it has no erotic significance for him, so the kiss dramatizes the conflict between his individual desire and the models of desire he finds presented to him, thus playing a part in the construction of his identity. Before the experience itself, in the passage quoted above, he has described his focus on kissing Sonoko as his most serious miscalculation. What this means subsequently becomes clear, for it is obvious from Sonoko's reaction to their kisses that she thinks marriage is implied. The fact that he should be caught out by this gains meaning only when we know that Sonoko's reaction was entirely in line with contemporary representations of the significance of kissing.

How could the narrator be unaware of this general perception? That he is unaware of it until Sonoko's family's expectation of a marriage proposal forces him to end the relationship is final proof of his complete alienation from general conceptions of sexuality. The act of kissing, so carefully learned by him, is in fact completely meaningless – it is unaccompanied by desire and, for him, does not carry the social significance it does for others. In this way, his focus on kissing both reflects the significance of the kiss as constructed by popular culture and uses it to

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underline the narrator's sexual desire for boys in his conspicuous failure to understand kissing and integrate it into his sexual desire. In the end, the act of kissing becomes an ugly and traumatic experience, when a friend takes him to visit a prostitute. Once again, he begins acting out what he has learned about kissing:

A sense of obligation led me to embrace the woman. When I put my arms round her shoulders and went to kiss her, her heavy shoulders shook with laughter.

'No! You'll get lipstick on you! This is what you do.'

The prostitute opened her big mouth with its gold teeth edged with lipstick and stuck out her sturdy tongue like a stick. I copied her and poked out my tongue. The ends of our tongues touched... I doubt others will understand it – the fact that numbness is similar to a sharp pain. I felt that my whole body was going numb from a sharp pain, but a pain that I was quite unable to feel. I dropped my head onto the pillow.

Ten minutes later the impossibility of it was firmly established. My knees shook from the embarrassment. (341)

The mismatch between the symbolic importance of the kiss as the key signifier of heterosexual desire and Kōchan's experience of it links directly to the proof of his 'incapacity' with women. Kissing has failed him both as a romantic experience of love with Sonoko and as a physical experience of desire with the prostitute. By contrast, an imagined kiss has great erotic power for Kōchan, when he kisses the lips of the murdered swimmer in his cannibalistic fantasy quoted above. After the cook has killed and stripped the boy he is put on the chopping block: 'The naked boy lay there face up, his mouth slightly open. I gave his mouth a long kiss' (244-45).

In 'The Locked Room', the kiss again plays a pivotal role, as the instrument by which the

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young daughter, Fusako, threatens to bring the fantasies from Kazuo's dreams into reality. On his first visit, described above, he gets an erection when she kisses him and he quickly moves her away. On his second visit, she again climbs onto his lap as soon as they are alone.

Kazuo cuddled the nine year-old girl on his lap. Her hair smelled of milk and her flesh gave off a sweet smell. When he embraced her, she had the resilience of human flesh. Suddenly Fusako twisted her body like an acrobat and slipped out of his arms. She jumped up and clapped her hands.

'Let's dance! Let's dance!'

He put on a record. The music started to play. With a natural movement, Fusako went to the door and locked it, which she had forgotten to do.

'Let's dance! Let's dance!'

Nevertheless, it was a dance that required some skill. Because of her height, Fusako only came up to about Kazuo's stomach. He danced holding her up in his right arm. She was terribly heavy and unsteady, but this brought her face up level with his. Fusako pursed her lips and, as if stamping a document, pressed the pursed wrinkles of her lips against Kazuo's.

Kazuo dropped her violently. Fearfully disturbed, he fixed Fusako with a stare.

'Listen. I won't dance with you unless you promise never to kiss me again.'

'I promise, I promise.'

Fusako put her arm round his shoulder, then suddenly kissed him again, before running off. (MZ 19: 243-44)

On his final visit, she is dressed gaudily and wearing makeup.

Kazuo put his arm round her shoulder as usual, but when he did so he realized she was stiff. This resistance excited him. For the first time he kissed Fusako like a woman. Her lips were not dry.

Kazuo was transfixed by the word of which he had long been afraid. 'Split.' He did not know what to do. 'It would break her. I would split her apart.' Fusako quietly (*otonashiku*) allowed herself to be

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embraced. Her flesh was in his hands, waiting.

Kazuo noticed that Fusako had not locked the door just now. He got up and went to lock it, but just then there was a knock at the door. (263-64).

The situation is resolved by the arrival of the maid, who informs Kazuo that Fusako has had her first period that day (even though she is only nine). She also informs him that she is in fact her daughter, not the daughter of the mistress (Kiriko, Kazuo's now dead lover). Kazuo tells Fusako that he had better not come again and as he leaves she locks the door behind him. In these increasingly disturbing scenes between Kazuo and the child, Mishima again uses the kiss as a very significant, dysfunctional symbol of desire. Dysfunctional, because its symbolic meaning constantly eludes definition, unable to function either as a harmless sign of affection or as an expression of sexual desire. Kazuo's experience of kissing Fusako is as disturbing for him as the prostitute's kiss is for Kōchan, but not because it reveals a failure of desire. For Kazuo, it disturbs precisely because it awakens desire and, when he finds that Fusako's lips are moist like those of an adult woman, desire threatens to elide the distinction between fantasy and reality, as the word 'split' takes him back to the story he had dreamed of telling in the Bar of the Covenant: of raping a nine year-old girl and thus splitting her open. That this threat of fantasy spilling over into reality is real is indicated by the fact that, for the first time, Kazuo himself moves to lock the door. Mishima plays on the resonance that the kiss has in the popular imagination to suggest the enormous disruptive potential of desire.

ADVICE FOR YOUNG LADIES

Women's magazines of the Shōwa 30s (late 1950s and early 1960s) present a very different set of images and stories to those of the *kasutori* magazines. However, they are no less involved in the discursive construction of desire than their racier predecessors of the 1940s. What constitutes the discourse of desire in these women's magazines is not the representation of perversions, the urge to shock of the *ryōki shumi*, but the elaboration of forms of desire more suited to the social reality of post-Occupation Japan. Whereas the circumstances of the late 1940s lent themselves to the exploration of the extremes of human experience, the more conservative atmosphere of the mid-1950s onwards, with its ideals of family, purity, stability and economic progress, brought a focus on married life and the middle-class family. So articles abound on love, engagement, marriage and family life, on how to achieve happiness in all of these and also on the problems and threats attendant on them.

Much of the treatment of love and sex in these magazines is in the form of advice and much, if not most, of this advice is dispensed by men. So, for instance, *Wakai josei* (Young Lady) carried a nine-part monthly series beginning in September 1955 by Fukuda Tsuneari entitled 'Notebook for Happiness' (*Kōfuku he no techō*) with individual titles such as 'Beauty and Ugliness,' 'Femininity,' and 'Motherhood.' Subsequent series in the same magazine in the following years included 'Notebook on Youth' (*Seishun no techō*) by Yoshiyuki Junnosuke and 'The Peripheries of Love' (*Ren'ai no shūhen*) by Ishihara Shintarō. All of these give what must have been considered a valuable insight for women readers into the male psychology of love. How to be attractive to men, to win and keep them were clearly matters of concern to these

readers. However success in love and marriage is certainly not presented as plain sailing, as, for instance, two of the essays in Ishihara Shintarō's 'Peripheries of Love' series illustrate: 'Lies in Love' (*Ren'ai no uso*) in the January 1960 issue of *Wakai josei* and 'Jealousy' (*Shitto*) in the following month. Of all the difficulties involved in love and marriage, one stands out: the issue of adultery. More or less discrete discussions of sexual life within marriage and of the threat, or allure, of adultery appear fairly frequently.

For Mishima, these women's magazines provided an important outlet for his popular fiction in the 1950s and early 1960s. Starting with *Pure White Night* (*Junpaku no yoru*) in 1950, Mishima published these 'entertainment novels' at the rate of roughly one a year until the late 1960s, when his right-wing political writing for youth publications (such as *Pocket Punch Oh!*) took their place. *Pure White Night* was originally serialized in the women's magazine *Fujin Kōron* and many of the other 'entertainment novels' were also published in women's magazines of one kind or another, including *Fujin Kurabu* (Women's Club), *Wakai Josei* and *Madomoazeru* (Mademoiselle). They differ from the better known works of Mishima in several respects connected with their place of publication: the language is often simpler and less consciously literary, the plots racier and more contemporary, the narrative more direct and less philosophical; and the protagonists are mostly women.

Whether it is the relation of *Confessions of a Mask* to the *kasutori zasshi* or that of Mishima's entertainment novels to women's magazines, a comparison serves not only to give context to Mishima's writing, but also to show how well his subject matter fitted with popular tastes of the time. Quite apart from the different nuances to be found in the novel, the choice of subject

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matter and themes in *Confessions of a Mask* chimed very well, as we have already seen, with the interests of the reading public, if magazines are an indication of this. To what extent this can be taken as a conscious strategy on the author's part is difficult to say, but it should not be forgotten that the novel was a commercial success and the familiarity of the reading public with representations of schoolboy love from other literary publications and with sadistic/masochistic desire from popular magazines, as well as their fascination with the subject of kissing, makes Mishima's strategy in writing *Confessions of a Mask* as his first novel after becoming a full-time writer look perhaps less risky. By the mid-1950s his position as a successful writer was far more established and he was contributing to, as much as responding to, the discourse of desire in Japanese literary and popular culture. It is not unreasonable, therefore, to consider Mishima's writing, at least partly, in terms of his strategy for success as a writer.

In particular when putting Mishima's entertainment novels in a critical perspective, it is worth considering in very materialist terms what Mishima was doing by writing them also in order to avoid the risk of getting too carried away with ideas about a 'gay writer' expressing his feminine side. The discursive connections between what he was writing and the context into which he was publishing make such psychological hypothesizing unnecessary. Writing easy-to-read, racy stories for publication in mass-market magazines was clearly part of what might be called Mishima's competitive strategy, but something needs to be said to justify my use of that phrase in a literary context.

The basic model for analyzing 'competitive advantage' taught in every business school

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describes four forces affecting competitive rivalry. (That authors and their works are in rivalry with other claims on their readers' time is surely unarguable.) The four forces are: supplier power, buyer power, barriers to entry and the threat of substitutes (Porter 1985). We can put this in terms of the author's position by looking at what these mean in practice: as purveyors of the written word, they are threatened by substitution of other types of reading matter, such as magazines and non-fiction, as well as other claims on readers' spare time, such as cinema or television. The degree of buyer power depends on their concentration and, in the case of readers of fiction, the growing strength of particular groups of consumers, such as women readers or younger readers, can affect the dynamics of the literary market. Among barriers to the entry of new competitors is what is termed 'brand franchise' and clearly the status of the author, in terms of name recognition, critical acclaim and public respect is important in avoiding being supplanted by newer writers. The final force, supplier power, could describe the relation of the author to his/her publishers and the degree of supplier power is generally explained as depending to a large extent on concentration: a publisher's power over an author will similarly be diminished to the extent that the author has other avenues of publication.

Such a materialist approach to the author's creative production is not dissimilar to that elaborated by Bourdieu, whose analysis of what he calls the 'market of symbolic goods' accounts for the production of culture in terms of relationships between writers, publishers, educators and others. However, Bourdieu's distinction between 'high' and 'middle-brow' culture – to which he refers as 'the field of restricted production' and 'the field of large-scale production' respectively – seems too definitive to account for Mishima's competitive strategy. Bourdieu

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states that 'the field of large-scale production, whose submission to external demand is characterized by the subordinate position of cultural producers in relation to the controllers of production and diffusion media, principally obeys the imperatives of competition for conquest of the market' (Bourdieu 1993: 125). By this distinction, Bourdieu concludes that the output of the author of middle-brow works is always ultimately determined by the consumers and publishers, but Mishima's ability to cross over between high and middle-brow culture (perhaps a less unusual achievement for Japanese writers than in the contexts examined by Bourdieu) suggests a much greater freedom to elaborate his own competitive strategy. Mishima exploited themes with contemporary resonance simultaneously to broaden his appeal in the mass market and to accumulate the cultural capital as a producer of 'pure' literature that allowed him to challenge conventional attitudes to those themes.

Thinking about Mishima as an author in these terms serves to emphasize why it is important to consider his fiction against the background of competing narratives. In his novels, he was not only expressing himself but also positioning himself in competition with other writers and other authorities. So Mishima's writing of easy-to-read, racy stories for mass-circulation women's magazines served to improve his ability to deal with all of these competitive forces. He positioned himself to take advantage of the growing importance of housewives and younger women as consumers in the high-growth era of the Showa 30s and not to be hit by changes in reading habits that favoured glossy popular magazines over pure literature. He achieved the same by his increasing involvement in cinema. All of this served to strengthen the Mishima brand. Publishing in magazines like *Wakai Josei* and *Madomoazeru*

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widened the range of avenues available for Mishima to express himself beyond the literary periodicals.

Indeed, it was not only as the author of serialized novels that Mishima appeared in these magazines. He was frequently the subject or author of articles in the same publications. For example, when his novel *Ojōsan* was published in *Wakai Josei* in 1960, an article on Mishima by Mishima himself preceded it in the December 1959 issue of the magazine: 'Digest of Mishima Yukio's Life' (*'Mishima Yuko no seikatsu daijesuto'*). He describes his lifestyle in terms that match the photo of him that illustrates the article (a shot of him shirtless, working out at the gym): 'When I was writing the novel, I did *kendō* twice a week and body-building three times a week, and I think that helped in making sure I was always fired up for my work,' he tells the readers (Mishima 1959: 155). Elsewhere Mishima appears as a member of roundtable discussions on social issues, writing on cinema and in photo shoots with his wife. So his voluntary construction as a kind of media celebrity and success as a writer of popular entertainment established his strength among consumers, while the weight of his serious literary fiction reinforced the longevity of the Mishima brand.

None of this – writing for women's magazines, or self-publicity in general – is, of course, exclusive to Mishima, but in addition to his decision to publish in popular women's magazines, the content of the stories published in them can also be viewed as an element of his successful competitive strategy. Not only do they feature young women as protagonists, but the subjects taken up in their narratives – dating and engagements, the problems of newlyweds, women living alone, their relationships and sex lives, psychological problems, adultery, abortion – are

the same subjects that appear in the problem pages and advice columns and in the feature articles of the women's magazines that published Mishima's stories. Thus, on the one hand he increased the interest in his stories by matching them so closely to the other content of the magazines in which he was published, and on the other hand he provided a kind of alternative narrative of women's desire for his readers, setting himself up as a parallel agony aunt, dispensing sometimes subversive advice to women.

As mentioned above, the issue most frequently treated as a threat to married life, but clearly one which fascinated in the era of middle-class nuclear families and purity education, was adultery. It is no surprise, then, that the theme of adultery should appear frequently in Mishima's fiction of the time, both his entertainment novels and his serious fiction. In particular, *The Wavering of Virtue* (*Bitoku no yoromeki*, 1957), *Kyōko's House*, *Play of the Beasts* (*Kemono no tawamure*, 1961) and *School of the Flesh* (*Nikutai no gakkō*, 1963) all feature adulterous relationships. (These novels are discussed in detail in the following chapters.) Mishima's use of the theme of adultery reflects the interest shown in women's magazines in the problems of married life and adultery. The September 1959 edition of *Wakai Josei* carried a conversation between Ōoka Shōhei and Takami Jun entitled 'A Discussion: On Adultery' (*Taidan: kantsū-ron*). The introduction reads: 'Young people today are obsessed, not so much with the real thing, but with the mood of adultery (*kantsū to iu mūdo*) from novels and films' (Ōoka 1959: 138). This encapsulates the attention to adultery, its threat to marriage and at the same time the denial of its real possibility for women found in the women's magazines of the time, with which Mishima engages. There is a questioning of the middle-class ideal of marriage in the women's magazines,

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but also an endless dialogue on how to get it right. A roundtable discussion entitled 'Doubts about monogamy (*Ippu-ippu-sei e no gimon*)' appeared in the January 1963 edition of *Madomoazeru*. In it Nozaka Akiyuki has this to say: 'Of course, divorce is legal but if you do divorce you will be criticized by society and there are financial burdens as well. So mostly people shut their eyes and put up with it' (126). In this context, conventional married life can be a trial, but one from which there is no escape. The lives of Mishima's women present a fantasy which might have been attractive to readers. Of course, the appearance of adultery in a novel is by no means surprising, but Mishima can be said to have ridden the wave of the 'mood of adultery' in the popular press, which was itself perhaps the underside of the conservative turn of the high-growth era. One section of the conversation between Ōoka Shohei and Takami Jun is entitled *Yoromeki e no yūin* – 'the attraction of wavering' – and the use of the word *yoromeki* to mean adultery reflects how widely Mishima's treatment of the subject attracted public interest. *Yoromeki* became something of a buzzword thanks to his novel. In the same way, the title of his novel *Nagasugita haru* (*Too Long the Spring*), which describes how an overlong engagement almost drives a young couple to separate, came to be shorthand for this kind of problem in popular usage.

Sex itself was a frequent topic for magazines' articles. *Wakai Josei* and *Madomoazeru* – let alone *Fujin Kōron* – were certainly not as frank as their more recent counterparts, but articles with titles like 'Letter on sex for married girls' (*Kekkon shita musume e no sei no shokan*) and 'The medicine of love and marriage' (*Ren'ai to kekkon no igaku*) dispensed advice on sex strictly within the context of marriage. Mishima's stories treat the subject of sex with gusto, by

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comparison with these advice columns, and not from a normative perspective (see the discussion in the next chapter). Even where the sex depicted does not involve women, it is seen through the eyes of a female subject and treats all that falls outside conventional sexual life within marriage with relish. As my readings of *Bitoku no yoromeki* and *Nikutai no gakkō* show, these stories went to create a fantasy of women's agency in the sexual sphere, which can be seen as a part of Mishima's competitive strategy as a writer of fiction. But was this just a commercial strategy, or did he present something new for his women readers? It seems that commercial advantage coincided with Mishima's own rejection of normative concepts of desire to produce stories that suggested possibilities other than the subordinate role of a wife and mother, even though these were at the level of fantasy, and so were genuinely liberating for the reader.

There is undoubtedly something ironic about describing Mishima, a man so obsessed with the masculine and closely linked with right-wing politics, as having some kind of radical role for women. But we should remember the context of women's magazine publishing at the time, in which the voice of authority was very often a male writer even in magazines like *Wakai Josei*. When writers like Ishihara Shintarō and Fukuda Tsuneari were penning regular columns on love and relationships for *Wakai Josei*, we should perhaps consider Mishima's stories for their content rather than the identity of the author. Even Ishihara Shintarō's articles do so to some extent, but Mishima's entertainment novels presented to the reader lifestyles that contrasted sharply with the conservative ideology of the high-growth period.

Four

Heteroeroticism: Writing Desire in the Feminine

WIVES AND MOTHERS

Just as the representation of male-male desire in *Confessions of a Mask* and *Forbidden Colours* is, as I have attempted to show, both constructed by and resistant to contemporary discourse on desire, representations of women's sexual desire in Mishima's fiction of the Shōwa 30s (1955-1964) are formed partly by the dominant motifs of contemporary discussions of sexuality and gender roles, but are at the same time informed by a resistance to sexual norms. This means that the desiring female subjects of Mishima's narratives are, on the one hand, forced to overcome or circumvent the obstacles to sexual autonomy actually facing their real-life counterparts, while, on the other hand, their ability successfully to resist restrictions on their sexual behaviour depends in large part on their distance from the lives of most contemporary Japanese women. That distance has two aspects: the material one of their social distance, as wealthy and privileged women, from the lives of ordinary middle-class housewives, and the subjective one of their perception of themselves as fundamentally different from the mass of society. Their sense of distance and difference, by being materialized as social privilege rather than marginality, works against any easy sympathetic identification of the reader with the subject of the narrative, even though Mishima wrote so many of his novels in this period

for publication in mass-market women's magazines. This resistance to easy identification, together with the misogyny espoused in some of his non-fiction, makes it unsurprising that resistance to sexual norms is portrayed in ways quite at odds with the terms of contemporary feminist discourse, which focused on the rights of women as mothers and wives.

It is worth first briefly examining the terms of that discourse, by which I mean the contemporary debate on the role of women, in order to show how far Mishima's female characters are from social norms as reflected in that debate. This will also suggest why it is impossible to view Mishima, even when writing stories about sexually independent women for women's magazines, as writing in sympathy with any contemporary discourse of feminism. This is, above all, because the mainstream of what could loosely be called progressive feminist thinking at the time (as well as more conservative thinking) was based very firmly on the conception of women as wives and mothers, a conception which had its roots in wartime and pre-war ideology, in spite of the material changes that had taken place in women's lives in the postwar era (and during the war). Kathleen Uno has examined the ways in which the ideal of the 'good wife/wise mother' (*ryōsai kenbo*), which became firmly entrenched as part of state ideology from the Meiji period up to the end of the Pacific War, continued to make itself felt through the 1950s and '60s in state policy, corporate life and women's activism, in spite of the apparent disavowal of wartime and prewar ideology. Uno argues that, although the term itself disappeared from public usage after 1945 and it ceased to be a part of education, *ryōsai kenbo* still influenced the conservative ruling parties' policies and the behaviour of businesses, and that women's own interpretation of *ryōsai kenbo* inspired their activism on issues including

peace, pollution and sexual mores. The period of militarism had shifted the emphasis in the socially sanctioned role of women from supportive wife to nurturing mother, as an increasing birthrate became a national priority. However social changes after 1945 continued this increasing emphasis on the importance of motherhood. 'As wives' work in serving their in-laws, maintaining the household, and assisting in the family enterprise diminished, their nurturing activities as mothers became more apparent' (Uno 1993: 304). The trend towards nuclear family households supported by a salaried man, and away from the larger family unit and family businesses, emphasized the role of motherhood. The focus of campaigning by women's groups also was on women's rights as mothers' rights; the manifesto of the Mothers' Congress (*Hahaoya taikai*), established in 1955, covered children's education and mother's health and welfare, and included in women's rights 'the abolition of prostitution, the protection of women workers' child-bearing capacities, and opposition to revival of the prewar family system' (309).

What came to be referred to as the 'housewife debate' (*shufu ronsō*) of the later 1950s encapsulated the terms of discussion that defined what a woman was in the Shōwa 30s. If the conflict between women's role as mothers and their increasing participation in the workforce was a matter of controversy, discussion of this in the 'housewife debate' mostly favoured motherhood over all other concerns. The main vehicle of this *ronsō* was the monthly *Fujin kōron* and a series of articles published in it in 1956 illustrate the terms of the debate. Ishigaki Ayako's article 'On the Housewife as a Second Career,' published in the February 1956 edition, laments the tedium of the housewife's life and criticizes women for not taking other options more seriously, for treating jobs as only a means to find a good husband. She sees the root of

the problem in the historical change in women's lives from producers (working in family enterprises or making food and clothes for their family) to consumers. She asks: 'In the midst of meaningless, vacuous lives, are we not too much taken up in the outward appearance of clothes and cosmetics?' (Ishigaki 1981: 196). Mishima's women would certainly be targets of such criticism, for these aspects of life are of far greater concern to them than work. Ishigaki's solution, though, is that women should take advantage of the ease of modern housework to make work creatively for themselves, by forming local nurseries for working mothers, educating each other's children and so on. So even Ishigaki's materialist argument, in which her identification of consumerism as a problem is explained in largely Marxist terms, reaches a conclusion which is based on the conception of women as mothers, although it does argue for women's economic independence from men and their freedom to seek careers *as well as* motherhood. The July 1956 edition of *Fujin kōron* published a riposte to Ishigaki's argument by the dramatist and conservative critic Fukuda Tsuneari, 'Mistaken Arguments for Women's Liberation' (*Ayamareru josei kaihō ron*) which suggests that women's unhappiness is not to be solved in the economic sphere, but in the personal, through the love and trust of their partner. Fukuda says that behind Ishigaki's argument, and that of other feminists (*joken kakuchō ronsha*), is an inferiority complex which identifies productiveness with a career and with men. 'When they cannot obtain happiness as a woman dependent on a man, people start thinking about other substitutes. A career is such a substitute' (Fukuda 1981: 202). Fukuda clearly believes that the family is a higher calling than a career, and argues that to subordinate the meaning of the family (*katei*) to economics and production leads to an unhealthy lifestyle,

which he identifies as women living in apartments and having multiple partners. The October *Fujin kōron* published a response to both of these articles from no less a figure than Hiratsuka Raichō, who criticizes Ishigaki for belittling the role of housewives and Fukuda for denying the importance of practical legal and social changes. She argues that the choice of whether or not to have a career should be a free one. It is, she says, good for young people to be involved in productive activities, but not for young women from wealthy families to work simply to kill time until marriage (Hiratsuka 1981: 207).

Although Fukuda was responding to Ishigaki's more radical view of women's roles, the majority of contributions in the housewife debate were closer to Fukuda (see Buckley 1993). Fukuda was closely associated with Mishima in the late 1950s, as a dramatist and as a critic, and both are generally associated with the conservative ideology of the time (Matsumoto et al 2000: 576-78). It therefore goes against the easy characterization of Mishima as conservative that, as will be argued below, he gives his female protagonists the agency to resist the roles conservative ideology forced on them. Political trends were caught between a neotraditionalist view of women espoused by the Liberal Democratic Party government and the demands of social and economic reality, which saw increasing numbers of married women in the workforce, a phenomenon driven by the high rates of economic growth. The conservative solution to this conundrum was voiced in Prime Minister Satō's 1964 appeal for Japanese women to have more children. So even the rapid pace of economic and social change could be harnessed for the rhetorical identification of women with motherhood.

One further aspect of contemporary debate that should be noted is the recognition of

prostitution as a threat to the position of married women and mothers. It has already been seen that the abolition of prostitution was one of the objectives of politically engaged women, to the extent that the manifesto of the Mothers' Congress took it as axiomatic that abolition was to be campaigned for among the rights of women. However, the figure of prostitution was also present as a metaphor. A somewhat later article in *Fujin kōron* by Umesao Tadao, 'On the Redundancy of Wives' (*Tsuma muyō ron*), published in the June 1960 edition, is a complete rejection of Fukuda's line. Umesao takes an entirely materialist line in discussing contemporary relationships. He identifies activities such as dressmaking and cookery classes as evidence of the changing material basis of the relationship between husband and wife. Seeing the transformation of all spheres of society into the salaryman model (*sarariimanka*) as essentially a return to a feudal pattern, he argues that households have moved from a horizontal division of labour, in which women participated in the productive work of merchant and farming families, to a vertical one, with wives subordinate to husbands, who are in turn subordinate to their employers. As these subordinated wives have seen their work rendered superfluous, with the mechanization of housework and their other activities (cooking, clothes making, mending) taken over by specialists, their status has diminished, so that they are forced to fight back with 'camouflage labour' (*gisō rōdō*) in the form of cookery classes, flower arranging classes, dressmaking and so on, producing superfluous labour – what masquerades as labour but is really a hobby. Whereas wives were once described as maids who also provided sex, they could now be described as providers of comfort (*ian no teikyōsha*) who also provide sex. This he describes as *yūjoka* – the role of wife is turning into that of a prostitute (Umesao 1981: 222).

HETEROEROTIC NARRATIVES

Mishima's elaboration of a transgressive female sexuality, which is nevertheless out of sympathy with anything that would at the time have been seen as 'progressive' thinking on the lives of women, suggests that the 'transgressive' is a more important term than the 'female' and that the resistance to sexual norms implicit in these narratives is more fundamental and more radical than would be suggested by a characterization of these stories as sympathetic portrayals of female sexuality. The remainder of this chapter will seek to highlight the attributes of these representations of transgressive sexuality, in particular the insistent sense of difference and distance from non-sexual norms, that suggest they are patterned on something other than heterosexual desire.

If the women in these stories are marked by privilege rather than marginality, there are nevertheless other figures present in the text who are socially or sexually marginal and who sustain the inquiry into 'perverse' desire that drives *Confessions of a Mask* and *Forbidden Colours*. The interplay of social privilege and sexual marginality and the reflection of illicit heterosexual desire by same-sex desire give us reason to take seriously the kind of reading suggested by Mishima's own reported assertion that Etsuko in *Thirst for Love* is really a man (Keene 1984: 1191). Such a reading requires that we recognize a formal continuity between narratives such as *Confessions of a Mask* and *Kyōko's House* and also much of Mishima's popular fiction, in that these are stories not centered on men's desire for women. It also requires that we suspend the assumption that we are faced with familiar patterns of heterosexual desire and accept the possibility that we are being presented with heterosexual desire patterned on

same-sex desire.

If same-sex desire was one prominent thread in Mishima's fictional output – and that which first brought him to public attention – stories in which the narrative focus is firmly on the desire of women formed another increasingly prominent thread. *Thirst for Love* is an early example, but I would like to look in particular at a number of those texts from the Shōwa 30s which focus on women whose expressions of desire fall outside the sphere of heterosexual marriage. *The Wavering of Virtue* portrays a young married woman's affair with a man she knew before her marriage. In *Kyōko's House*, the central character, Kyōko, around whom gathers a fast-living set of young people, is separated from her husband and is the mother of a young child. *School of the Flesh* tells of a wealthy divorcee who becomes enamoured of a younger man and buys him out of his employment at a gay bar.

It is important for my reading of these stories that, as suggested above, we do not assume that they simply represent familiar patterns of heterosexual desire. To emphasize this, I would like to describe these as heteroerotic narratives, in which the reader is encouraged to identify with female characters in their relationship to male objects of desire. 'Heteroerotic' is a term in medical usage which refers to an erotic attraction to the opposite sex, but has not entered general usage in the way that 'homoerotic' has. This disparity of usage highlights the way in which the homoerotic is marked as an exception, while the heteroerotic is not, so that what is perceived as erotic in a context which has no specific reference to same-sex desire is described by the unmarked term: erotic. However a consideration of the usage of 'homoerotic' should remind us that what is implied is something other than a simple contrast of the 'homo-' with

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the 'hetero-.' While any representation suggestive of sexual desire could be described as erotic, including one which simply represents the object of desire, a homo-/heteroerotic representation would logically be one which also represented or implied the subject of desire, with the correct term decided by the genders of subject and object (allowing also for the possibility that each is both subject and object). Representations are nevertheless often described as homoerotic not because of any depicted erotic relationship (or behaviour) but simply because the object of desire is male, and frequently with the suggestion that to describe the representation as homoerotic has revealed something not previously made explicit. In other words, what lies behind this use of the term is the assumption that the subject of the erotic gaze and the consumer of the representation/image is intrinsically male. The categorization of Mishima's narratives and their representations of male objects of desire as heteroerotic rather than homoerotic is a reminder; firstly, that, in the case of *School of the Flesh* and *The Wavering of Virtue* (along with many other of Mishima's novels), they were written in the expectation that the consumers of the representation would be largely female, and, secondly, that the subjects of desire in these narratives are not transparent but reflect material relations of (among other considerations) gender, class and cultural authority that implicate both author and reader.

Apart from the obvious presence of a female protagonist, these three novels have a number of characteristics in common. Each in its own way portrays women pursuing sexual relationships which are at odds with the ideal of family life as it was being constructed in Japan in the high-growth era of the late 1950s to early 1960s. Inasmuch as that ideal was essentially

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a middle-class one, the women in these stories are both at variance with and outside of it, since their class and economic status allow them the freedom to structure their own social and erotic lives, or at least the leisure to escape the practical strictures of married life. Their simultaneous recognition of the demands of middle-class family life and distance from it is reflected in narrative elements which vigorously reject conformity and in the expression of a subjectivity which conflates conformity with mediocrity, rejecting both, and which is enabled by the women's positions of privilege.

As this description suggests, I seek to map how these novels interact with the social and discursive construction of women's sexuality at the time of their composition. One question to keep open is whether these stories can in any sense be considered 'women's literature' – or, more pertinently, whether it serves any critical purpose to answer this question. It is worth noting that *School of the Flesh* was first published in serial format in *Madomoazeru* between January and December 1964, making it clear that the intended audience was largely made up of women. *The Wavering of Virtue* was first published not in a women's magazine, but in *Gunzō*, but largely shares the characteristics of Mishima's popular fiction, and after its subsequent publication in book form became the second-best selling novel of 1957 (Matsumoto et al: 304). As already observed, these mass-market novels are marked by a simplicity of style and avoidance of the philosophizing to be found in much of Mishima's works of 'pure literature' (*junbungaku*), which has led to them receiving far less critical attention. However, as Donald Keene has observed, 'he seems ... to have found in such writing an outlet for aspects of his personality that were generally obscured in his more important works' (Keene: 1190). Keene

hints at a psychological motivation that led Mishima to express frivolity and desire in works in which female protagonists predominate, but this is a subjective interpretation which psychologizes formal (and objectively verifiable) similarities shared by this category of Mishima's novels: they concern female protagonists experiencing transgressive sexual desire. I will argue that the specific characteristics of these representations of desire pattern stories of heterosexual desire on homosexual desire, but these are nevertheless, in the first place, stories about women.

Clearly, though, these novels do not fall into the category of women's literature in the sense of *joryū bungaku*, since the author was not a woman. As Joan Ericson has described, the term has, at least until recently, been used to identify at the same time writing by women and writing in a certain style, assuming the former to entail the latter (Ericson 1996: 94-105). That *joryū bungaku* was not only a term with currency in the period under discussion, but indeed the basis of considerations of writing by, for and about women is illustrated by a roundtable discussion published in *Gunzō* in 1960, in which the participants were Sata Ineko, Enchi Fumiko, Sono Ayako and Hirabayashi Taiko (Enchi 1960). In a general discussion of the differences between men's and women's writing in postwar Japan, Hirabayashi argues that men are incapable of successfully portraying women, while in response to Kawakami Tetsutarō's contention that fiction is men's work Enchi asserts that there is some fiction that needs to be written by women, presumably implying that women need to give their own fictional account of a specifically female subjectivity. In particular, Hirabayashi argues that the only women Japanese male authors can portray are 'commercial women' (*shōbai onna*). She is

undoubtedly right to indicate the prevalence of representations of women involved in entertainment – whether prostitutes, waitresses or geisha – in contemporary and earlier fiction, with the result that these representations produce women as objects, not agents, of desire and that they are, in one way or another, commercially available to men.

Mishima's representations, by contrast, produce women as agents of their own desire and, while the commercialization of sex is a significant motif, it is deployed in very different ways. This is most obviously the case in *School of the Flesh*, where it is the male object of desire who is paid for by the female protagonist. However we wish to describe these stories – for example as women's literature written by a man, or a male writer writing for a female mass audience, or indeed a male writer using female characters as a pretext for portraying men as the objects of desire – it is clear that Mishima is doing something different from those contemporary texts which produce women as the objects of heterosexual male desire. In this sense, they may be considered continuous with his earlier novels dealing with same-sex desire, exploring heteroerotic desire for the male, just as the earlier novels explored homoerotic desire for the male.

DIFFERENT FROM THE OTHERS

The most cynical and detached of the four characters who revolve around Kyōko in *Kyōko's House* is Seiichirō, a young businessman, who, half way through the novel, is sent by his employer to work in their New York office. At a dinner party held at a country house outside

New York, he meets Mrs. Yamakawa, wife of the chairman of Yamakawa Bussan, the company for which he works. In spite of the social distance between them, which Seiichirō's wife finds daunting, Seiichirō addresses Mrs. Yamakawa with undue familiarity (MZ 7: 479-85). He jokes that his father-in-law (a director of Yamakawa Bussan) will be jealous to see a photograph of the two of them side by side, as he (the father-in-law) still dreams of Mrs. Yamakawa, whom he met in India in the 1920s. Far from being offended by his suggestive remarks, Mrs. Yamakawa sees something in Seiichirō and responds in kind. Later that evening Seiichirō feels the scratch of her diamond ring on the back of his hand, as she beckons him into a quiet corner. After asking him what sports he used to play (clearly a response to his physical appearance), she asks if he would like to accompany her some time to a far more interesting kind of party – a 'secret party,' as she puts it. Seiichirō reflects that he feels at ease with this older woman, able to reveal a side of himself he has previously revealed only at Kyōko's house. This sense of ease on his part would appear to have a sexual significance, as the other occasion on which this description – of feeling as though he is at Kyōko's house – is deployed is when he is at the 'special party' itself, which turns out to be a rather high-class orgy. The young man's flirty banter, her recognition of 'something' in him, the surreptitious conversation and the invitation to an orgy – all of this produces a set of scenes marked by secrecy and subterfuge with either a sexual subtext (in Seiichirō's first meeting with Mrs Yamakawa) or overtly sexual content (at the orgy). What gives these scenes a suggestive twist is that the sexual subtext is not centered on a sexual encounter between the characters but on their mutual recognition of an undefined 'something' in each other, which is nevertheless ultimately confirmed by a scene of sexual

activity – the orgy. The narrative attention to secrecy in this context produces something other than straightforward social interaction, or indeed a heterosexual encounter.

Sex is explicitly a matter of significance to Seiichirō in the New York episodes in another way. As a result of his work commitments, his wife, Fujiko, is bored and lonely. In a coffee shop she meets their neighbour, Frank, who is also the friend of Jimmy, whose apartment she and Seiichirō are renting. Frank appears to be making advances to her. During Seiichirō's prolonged absence on business in Chicago, she agrees to go for dinner with him and although nothing happens that night, the next day she invites him in and apparently succumbs to his advances. Upon Seiichirō's return Fujiko confesses her adultery. He reacts coldly to this confession but we are told that he is in fact surprised – above all by the fact that Fujiko's partner in her adultery is Frank. For what he knows and his wife does not is that Frank is Jimmy's long-term lover. We learn later, from a conversation between Seiichirō and Mrs. Yamakawa, that Jimmy had previously told Seiichirō about his relationship with Frank and had, in fact, tried unsuccessfully to seduce him; that they had nevertheless remained friends even to the extent of Seiichirō and Fujiko renting Jimmy's apartment when he went abroad; and that after Fujiko's confession Seiichirō went to Frank and threatened to reveal Frank's sexuality to Fujiko if he approached her again. Rather than being confused by this unusual constellation of sexual desires, Seiichirō puts it to good use. We know from his unconcerned reaction to Jimmy's advances and from his enjoyment of the exotic sexual displays at the New York orgy, that unconventional sexuality is a source of amused interest for him, as it is for Mrs. Yamakawa, who says at the orgy that she 'adores seeing ridiculous things' (*kokkei na mono*, MZ 7: 522). In particular, *knowledge of*

sexuality is a source of strength for him. He derives great satisfaction from the realization that Fujiko is unaware of Frank's same-sex relationship, so much so that it becomes the confirmation and the crowning glory of his vision of the world as fundamentally stupid. More than that: 'Holding in his hand the key to the impossibility of mutual understanding between people, he was, as it were, a god in that small world' (512). Once he has resolved never to tell Fujiko what he knows, the knowledge of Frank's homosexuality allows him to reach the ecstatic peak of his conception of how the world is, with himself as the possessor of a transcendent knowledge that extends far beyond the question of sexuality that motivated this vision.

Mrs. Yamakawa's relation to same-sex desire is also complex. She makes two comments on Seiichirō's story: firstly, that New York is full of women who delight in serially seducing homosexual men, to whom she refers as *nanshoku-ka*, and that Seiichirō should at least be thankful that his wife is not one of those; and secondly, that Jimmy showed great discernment in wanting to seduce Seiichirō, observing that *nanshoku-ka* see the attractions of other men far more clearly than women. 'Women should learn more from *nanshoku-ka*,' she concludes (520).

Another picture of women's interaction with homosexual men is presented in *School of the Flesh*. Taeko, a 39 year-old proprietress of a fashion boutique, is friends with two other wealthy divorcees, Suzuko and Nobuko. Taeko is a baroness of the pre-1945 aristocracy and all three grew up in high Tokyo society of the years before war and defeat. At one of their regular dinners, Suzuko mentions that she has recently been to the *Hyacinth*, a 'gay bar' (*gei bā*) in Ikebukuro with a particularly handsome barman, who she thinks is very much Taeko's type. Suzuko takes Taeko there and Taeko is indeed very taken with the barman, Senkichi. Taeko

returns to the bar on her own to pursue Senkichi and after a number of dates succeeds in sleeping with him. After their next monthly dinner, the three women all go on to the *Hyacinth* for a drink and Taeko listens distractedly to Nobuko and Suzuko's conversation:

'I haven't been to a gay bar in ages. But it's annoying to think that in the whole of Tokyo the only places where women can be flattered and allowed to have a good time are unhealthy places like this.'

'You get flattered at foreigners' parties too'

'Yes, by old men with paunches.'

'If you like them so young, you should go to an American army base or something.'

'I don't like young Americans, they're arrogant and conceited and obstinate. Oh, if only Japan had been occupied by the Italian army!' (MZ 9: 459)

For these wealthy women, the cultural meaning of a 'gay bar' is quite detached from the sexuality of the men associated with it. The *Hyacinth* in *School of the Flesh* is to be distinguished from café *Rudon* in *Forbidden Colours* and it is important to note that Mishima is not depicting the same phenomenon in the two novels. Two terms that appear throughout *School of the Flesh* are *gei bōi* and *gei bā*. McLelland observes that from the early 1950s the 'perverse' magazines began to discuss a new character, the *gei bōi*, 'whose place of work was not the streets [as it had been for the *danshō*] but the bars' (McLelland: 77). The figure of the *gei bōi* represented a shift in the representation of men who desired men, being different to that of the *danshō* in that they were associated less with prostitution than with entertainment, but they shared with the earlier *danshō* the association with gender ambivalence. They were effeminate in appearance but did not seek to pass as women. Thus, while the term 'gay' came to be associated in the Anglophone world with an egalitarian paradigm, in Japan *gei* developed

through the 1950s and '60s as a model of gender ambivalence (either effeminate or transgender): 'from the mid-1950s, *gei* emerged as a transgender category strongly associated with the entertainment world and was not available as a designation for more gender-normative, masculine homosexual men' (McLelland 102). Although the word entered usage from English during the Occupation, its association with *gei* 芸 meant that it tended to be viewed as an occupational category. As a place of entertainment, *gei bā* attracted a variety of customers, not necessarily men who desired men. What the press referred to as a '*gei būmu*' saw the number of *gei bā* in Tokyo rise from around twenty in 1957 to nearly sixty (102). The *gei bā* and *gei bōi* now catered to women as well as men and some of the staff were known to be just 'straight' students earning money. McLelland notes two magazine articles from 1963 that refer to the 'touristization' of *gei bā* that was seeing larger numbers of women customers (108).

For Taeko, Nobuko and Suzuko the value of a *gei bā* is to be weighed against that of a US army base as a place for slumming it in the company of young men, and being pleasantly chatted up, with the possibility of a sexual encounter. On balance, *gei bā* compare favourably, for there they can at least be assured that they will be treated properly – they are, after all, paying for it.

What is apparent from the representation in *School of the Flesh* of the *gei* subculture and the female characters' interaction with it is that the specific relations of identity to sexual desire merit some critical inquiry, since they are not what a later reader might take to be the obvious relations at play when a *straight* woman visits a *gay* bar. It is also clear that in the

representation of sexual identities and expressions of desire, such material considerations as wealth, class, economic relations and age are no less implicated than what might be thought of as 'simple' desire. Senkichi's sexual identity remains ultimately undefined throughout the novel, but it is at least clear that he does not fit into the category of *gei* that defines the bar and its other employees. When the *Hyacinth* is first introduced, the category is indeed described as an effeminate one: the *gei bā* is cognate with the *gei bōi* who serve there, of whom the most visible is 'Teruko,' the boy who becomes Taeko's ally in her conquest of Senkichi, and who wears make-up and a woman's kimono. Senkichi is marked out from the start as different from this type, as sturdy and masculine. Suzuko describes him in advance as having 'not the slightest bit of femininity' about him: 'He stands haughtily behind the bar, with the face of a man among men. It may be, though, he stands out particularly because the bar boys are so girly' (405). Taeko's first sighting of him fits this description: 'His face, looking straight ahead as he answered the bar boys, had a masculine beauty (*bidan*) you rarely ever see, in his manly (*ririshii*) eyebrows and his masculine (*otoko-rashii*) features' (407). However this masculinity of appearance that distinguishes him from the *gei bōi* certainly doesn't make him straight, as Teruko soon informs Taeko that Senkichi will sleep with anyone - ¥5,000 will usually do the trick. He is indeed a 'man among men' in more than one sense. This information from Teruko only comes later, though, and Senkichi's sexuality is for a time a complete mystery to Taeko. He agrees to go on a date with her, but keeps his distance. The possibility that he is positively uninterested in women she frames to herself as the 'conjecture that, in spite of his faultless masculine appearance, he might actually be an *onnagirai*' (410). So for her *onnagirai*

(woman-hater) refers to men who are sexually not attracted to women, while *gei bōi* refers to the effeminate habitués of the *gei bā*. Her puzzlement arises from an assumption that the two should be coterminous, but she at least entertains the possibility that they are not. There is some similarity between the figure of Senkichi and that of Yūichi in *Forbidden Colours* in that a ruthless but attractive, sporty (Senkichi is a boxer at school, Yūichi a swimmer) young man dupes women – for Senkichi ultimately betrays Taeko in order to marry another, younger woman, whom he does not love, for her money – although unlike Yūichi, Senkichi does not have another man manipulating his actions. Also unlike Yūichi, Senkichi's sexuality (in the sense of whom he really desires) is ambiguous, but his past – as sexually available to men – at least makes it possible to draw a parallel between him and Yūichi, as does the sense of his mismatch with the gay milieu in which he finds himself.

Teruko, the bar boy, is represented as a very different sexual type to Senkichi. Effeminate (in dress, manners and speech), with a very marginal social status, he does nevertheless possess an integrity which Senkichi does not. When things go wrong for Taeko, it is to Teruko that she turns for help and we are told that Teruko is the only person with whom she feels she can be honest (596). What sets Teruko apart from the models of same-sex desire represented in *Confessions of a Mask* or *Forbidden Colours* is that his is a sexual identity that he accepts as putting him outside society, choosing to live out that separateness in the subculture (whereas in the two earlier novels we found protagonists seeking an identity but either unaware of, or not accepting, the subculture). When Taeko meets him to ask for help, she also asks him about his future. He says he'll always be in this milieu of the *gei bā*. 'I'll be here for the rest of my life. I'll

fall in love with a man and be cast aside, fall in love and be cast aside, and in the end I'll buy some delinquent with the little bit of money I've saved and I'll be killed by him for my money. It's a happy life, isn't it?' (601). Taeko asks if he might not leave it all behind one day and get married.

'Marry – you mean with a woman?'

'Of course.'

'Oh, how disgusting! I'd much rather die than sleep with a woman.'

A CLASS OF ONE'S OWN

Teruko's sexuality is defined by a sense of difference from the norms of society. Senkichi is defined by his difference from the *gei bōi* at the *Hyacinth* as well as by his difference from the rest of society. However this sense of difference applies not only to the queer male characters in these stories (with their various designations: the *gei* [Teruko], the *nanshoku-ka* [Frank] and the ambiguous [Senkichi]), but is also constitutive of the characters of the female protagonists. The combination of a sense of intrinsic difference and unconventional sexual behaviour produces characters represented as separate from society, outside sexual norms. These women are thus as different as the queer male characters, and in much the same terms: both groups are represented as self-consciously at odds with the society around them in ways that are fundamentally connected to their experience of sexual desire.

However the sense of difference felt by the women in these stories is marked not by

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marginality, but by social privilege and the possession of cultural authority. What sets them apart most obviously is their wealth and social position. Taeko is a baroness and an independent businesswoman. In *Kyōko's House*, Kyōko herself is a wealthy woman and, while separated from her husband, is in possession of the large family house with its balcony overlooking the Meiji Shrine. The protagonist of *The Wavering of Virtue*, Setsuko, is the daughter of a wealthy family. None are constrained by the economic necessities facing the average middle-class Japanese housewife.

The women's own sense of difference is revealed in their snobbery. Although Setsuko is not typical of the salaried classes, her dull husband, Ichirō, is; he works late and frequently comes home drunk. As their sex life diminishes soon after marriage as a result, Setsuko decides that she is in love with Tsuchiya, with whom she shared her first kiss before her marriage to Ichirō and whom she frequently runs into socially. They meet surreptitiously a few times but do not even kiss. Nevertheless she feels they must break it off and, when Tsuchiya's name is linked to an actress in her friends' gossip, she believes that she feels no jealousy, but her snobbery is given full rein by the fact that the other woman is an actress:

Out of a natural prejudice, she felt contempt for the trade of actress. The outward reason for this contempt was that there was not a single actress with good taste in clothes, and she thought that this was because they were badly brought up. Setsuko hated the average taste of the masses. (MZ 6: 516)

This sense of difference from the crowd also informs Setsuko's sexual fantasy. In spite of her intention to break things off, she continues to meet Tsuchiya. One night when they are out in Tokyo, there is a huge power cut and in the darkness they go to a park. There they touch for

the first time, while gazing out at the city, which looks as though it had been struck by some kind of civil disturbance.

To see the lights, which until now had been bright, suddenly switched off into darkness was a fearful sight. Even the signals at intersections went out. Traffic police began directing the traffic holding lanterns. In the roads only car headlights flashed into sight, flickered and went by, piercing the darkness with their uncertain light.

This sense of insurrection, however, matched their feelings very well. (529)

This atmosphere of riot or insurrection is both enervating and permissive, for the darkness allows them to embrace for the first time and to feel each other's bodies. It is akin to the chaos of wartime, to which Kyōko in *Kyōko's House* is erotically attached. They hear someone in the darkness in the park shouting out a rumour that a power station has been bombed, which sets Setsuko's imagination racing: 'Could this cry in the dark just now be true? If it was true, could a revolution or some such uprising be going on?' (530). She then goes on to imagine how, if this is a revolution, then she and Tsuchiya would be its victims. So the same disorderly darkness that permits their embrace also threatens them (in Setsuko's pleasurable fantasy) because of their class. Setsuko is set apart from the crowd both by her class and by her adulterous sexuality. She is able to experience her sense of difference with a frisson of sexual pleasure by virtue of her socially privileged position of power, which the reader is able to borrow in enjoying a positive representation of transgressive sexual desire.

Setsuko, Taeko and Kyōko are all set apart from anything that could be described as an 'ordinary' Japanese woman of the time because of their social status. Mishima received criticism for his concentration on what was left of Japan's aristocracy and the overrepresentation in his fiction of the upper strata of society. Nevertheless the social position of the women in his fiction allows them to do what a middle-class housewife could not. They are free to reject the roles assigned to them by contemporary expectations and granted an autonomy in framing their desires and sexual behaviour that much other fiction of the time denied them. There is, therefore, a tension between the potentially progressive exploration of women's sexual behaviour in these heteroerotic narratives, representing women as agents of their own desire, and the choice of protagonists whose social position put them far from the experience of most contemporary readers, making it difficult for such readers to see these stories as progressive. For it would be reasonable to assume, given the terms of current debate outlined in the introduction to this chapter, that Mishima's contemporary audience would have seen these female characters as at odds with the ideal of a woman's role, whether that role was defined in feminist or socially conservative terms. As we have seen, the ideological engagement with female sexuality, even among progressive thinkers, was concerned with protecting women's rights as married mothers (by outlawing prostitution, which threatened their position as wives, and dangerous work practices, which threatened their reproductive health) rather than expanding the range of sexual experience. This tension between Mishima's heteroerotic narratives and the reproductive motivation of feminist political positions of the time suggests that, for the narratives to be read as radical requires the assumption of a subject

position not defined by the concerns of heterosexual women. It is worth exploring the gulf between this subject position and that assumed by contemporary (feminist or other) discourse.

A QUEER SORT OF MOTHER

Judged by the terms of the 'housewife debate,' Mishima's three protagonists are clearly not in line with social norms. Even Hiratsuka Raichō, in her *Fujin kōron* article, appears to assume that, while economic necessity may require many women to work, wealthier/elite women are expected to be mothers above all else. For Mishima's three women protagonists, by contrast, motherhood is rather a threat to their sexuality than the purpose of it. Taeko is childless and takes as her lover a man young enough to be her son, while Kyōko leads a life which is in tension with her position as a wife and mother. This is central to the structure of *Kyōko's House* in that the whole of the action takes place during a period of separation from her husband, whose return to the household in the final scene signals the end of the world represented by her house, and is also illustrated in an earlier scene, when Kyōko is prevented from sleeping with Seiichirō only by the intervention of her young daughter, who appears in the doorway as they are heading for the bedroom. For Setsuko, motherhood is a possibility that threatens her dramatically throughout *The Wavering of Virtue*. Having resolved not to sleep with Tsuchiya, the fact that he never suggests that she should, in spite of their continued meetings, leaves her feeling lonely and so, for the first time in a long time, she coaxes her drunken husband to have

sex. (It is a highly ironic twist that the coldness of her lover drives her into the arms of her husband.) As a result she becomes pregnant, but because of the circumstances of the conception, she feels that the child would always remind her of Tsuchiya (even though it is not his) and decides to have an abortion. Feeling she deserves some recompense for this sacrifice, she arranges a trip away with Tsuchiya and it is then that they first have sex. As their relationship continues, she becomes pregnant twice by Tsuchiya and consequently undergoes two more abortions. The third abortion is a scene of particular horror, as the poor state of her health makes it necessary for the doctor to perform it without an anaesthetic. Although Setsuko does already have a young son with her husband, in the course of the narrative, and in increasingly dramatic circumstances, she physically denies her role as a mother through these repeated abortions. She is indeed contrasted with 'ordinary women' precisely in terms of her feelings as a mother:

As a mother, Setsuko was neglectful. It may be because, as he was a healthy child, there was no fear of illness, but if he had been a nervous child, he might have become ill from the capriciousness of his mother's love...

If she were an ordinary woman, would she not have thought to bolster her tenuous sense of existence with love for her child? Setsuko was not like that. For her to feel that she fully existed, she needed something like poetry. Even among poetry, the most erotic poetry. Of ideas, the closest to physical sensation. (MZ 6: 511)

The place of motherly love and duty is taken, for Setsuko, by a poetic conception, an ideal of virtue (the *bitoku* of the novel's title) in her imagination which she identifies with her affair with Tsuchiya – at least as long as it remains unconsummated physically – and in contrast to the corruption (*haitoku*) of the real world, which includes her family life. Before her

relationship with Tsuchiya becomes a physical one, there is in fact a quite conventional association of motherhood with virtue, when she avoids kissing her son goodnight because of a sense of guilt that her association with Tsuchiya has become more than chance. However, once she has actually had sex with Tsuchiya, on their trip away, she is glowing with love for her son – and even with goodwill towards her husband. This is the only time when her feelings for her son surface in the narrative and it is another ironic turn that they are prompted by a sexual experience with Tsuchiya. Indeed, her ability to experience the feelings of a conventional mother are inversely proportional to her behaviour as one.

The mismatch between the behaviour of Mishima's female characters and the values espoused in contemporary discussions of women might suggest that Mishima's women are in some ways ahead of their time. Indeed, in literary terms, they are. Nobuko Awaya and David Phillips give the following perspective on Japanese writing in the 1990s: 'One of the most cogent pieces of evidence that values are changing is the body of popular literature read by the working woman. Some Japanese women writers have been exploring topics that were previously unpopular. Female protagonists in novels are getting divorces, establishing single-family homes, and pursuing careers' (Awaya and Phillips 1993: 244). If the content of fiction can be evidence of contemporary values, then Mishima's fiction suggests the possibility of values other than the dominant ones of contemporary discourse on women. However it would be simplistic to describe these characters as ahead of their time or even forward looking. They themselves look (chronologically) backward for an escape from the strictures of social norms, reflecting the shift from the licence of the immediate aftermath of the war to the

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growing conservatism of the 1950s. Both Kyōko and Taeko look back to the chaos of the end of the war as a time of freedom, hence the significance of ruins (*haikyo*) as the dominant motif of Kyōko's aesthetic. Taeko and her friends, Nobuko and Suzuko, are in a position to lament the change of attitudes in the postwar period.

In their youth during the war, all three of them were the subject of unfavourable rumour sufficient to make people think their subsequent divorces only natural. The momentary pleasures of some people during the war did not attract the slightest public attention at the time and, as they were immediately forgotten in the confusion after the war, presented the appearance of the perfect crime, but just a handful of the fast set had lived long enough to pass on the story of the three women's younger days. The three of them had, for a time, denied it with a straight face, but even they had now begun quietly to admit the truth of the old stories, with a wink of the eye. (MZ 9: 389-90)

In terms of their sexual behaviour, these women are at odds with the times, but have a golden age to look back on. They feel themselves to be a separate group marked out from those around them by their sexual experience, so that their experience of their sexuality is analogous to that of the queer male characters.

In other senses Mishima's women do reflect the times, especially in their enjoyment of the consumerism that was the object of much of Ishigaki's complaint in her article in *Fujin kōron*. Their concern with fashion and luxury – the Western designer names, the expensive food – reflects the shift from postwar austerity to consumerism which dominated articles and advertising in women's magazines, and which was the reality of economic and social change in late 1950s/early '60s Japan. To this extent, Mishima neatly met the aspirations and expectations of his target audience in *School of the Flesh* and *The Wavering of Virtue*, again evidence of an effective competitive strategy. However, the sense of difference remains; Taeko,

for instance, does not fit the mould of the perfect housewife who was consuming these images and products – she cannot cook, she doesn't run a household, she isn't (any longer) married.

Having successfully got Senkichi, the barman, into bed, Taeko pursues the relationship but is disturbed when, on the occasion of her return trip to the *Hyacinth* with Suzuko and Nobuko, Senkichi is not there. She realizes that his continued involvement with the bar is too much of a worry for her and, with Teruko's intervention as a go-between, she buys Senkichi out with a large payment to the 'Mama-san' – a man whose lover Senkichi had been. Senkichi moves in to Taeko's apartment and is kept by her but they lead largely independent lives. However, Taeko is shocked when one day Senkichi makes a request: he wants to have an evening in at home and wants her to cook him dinner, like an ordinary couple. Taeko's shock comes ostensibly from the request for her to cook, which she never does – she eats either at work or in restaurants – but the tension comes from Senkichi's longing for something that Taeko has rejected: an average family life. In a typical interpretive turn within the narrative, Mishima has Taeko make a connection between this and femininity: 'She was surprised that Senkichi's whim had the power to make her terribly feminine' (MZ 9: 505). This interpretive intervention, however, cannot be taken at face value, since the subjectivity that the narrative represents is one that consistently rejects the identification of femininity with domesticity. What follows is a kind of caricature of the perfect '60s wife that Taeko is not. She rushes off to the supermarket and buys far too much food, then goes home to bury her head in Senkichi's woolly sweater. When she has cooked dinner, she is placed in an unusually passive position: 'She felt as though she was waiting for judgment. Although she behaved so authoritatively in sex, now, unconfident

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and fearful, she was concerned only with whether or not she had pleased the man' (510). On the other hand, Senkichi's delight in all this comes from the (for him) rare experience of an ordinary home life: 'Such an ordinary, such an uneventful, quiet dinner at 'home' and the moment after dinner... It was a rare thing even for Taeko, but for Senkichi it was, perhaps, a dream for which he had yearned for many years' (512). However, Taeko is certainly not converted to the attractions of family life. This ironic interlude, which surprises Taeko by tempting her to experience domesticity as feminine – to feel like a 'normal' housewife – is ultimately identified as a threat, or at best an illusion. For her, the life encompassed by work and her friendship with Nobuko and Suzuko is unequivocally superior:

Taeko knew that the purpose of these gatherings [with her friends] lay in telling absolutely no lies and having no secrets. The idea that life would be quite unlivable if they didn't somewhere have a place and a time like this, was something they had gained from their experience of divorce and their experience of work. Mere family life would never have brought them such wisdom.' (544)

The effect of Taeko's one-off domestic experience, then, is to reinforce the sense of her distance from the typical heterosexual married life that she and Senkichi have briefly acted out. She bears out the fears expressed in Fukuda's article in *Fujin kōron*, which paints a picture of the lifestyle that would ensue if women rejected the ideals of family life: ' They would each live in their own apartments, having affairs as they please with their partner of the moment' (Fukuda: 202).

Buckley has shown how the consumer boom, which saw a shift in all areas from postwar utilitarianism towards affluent, Westernized luxury, and which Taeko and her friends are represented as enjoying, also defined women in spatial terms. 'The representations of

advertising and the popular media (magazines, television, and film) directed women's lives into the interior spaces of the urban nuclear unit, which was itself being physically restructured in the wave of high-density urban architecture (*danchi* and *manshon*) of the 1960s and 1970s' (Buckley: 352). In spatial terms, Taeko denies this internal direction of women's lives. The whole of her life is lived outside the home, at work, in restaurants, hotels and nightclubs. Her consumption of the luxuries of the high-growth era does not tie her to domesticity. However, after she has brought Senkichi to live with her she does suddenly find herself sat at home waiting and her life has gone indoors. She has agreed that Senkichi should retain his independence and he is out late with increasing frequency, leaving her sat at home waiting, although when the two of them are both at home their life together is portrayed as comfortable. She feels that she, too, should have an affair (that is: with someone other than Senkichi) and asks Suzuko to find her someone. An older man – a politician – whom she meets as a result waits for her outside her apartment building late one night and she invites him indoors, not knowing whether Senkichi is home or not. Thus she consciously takes the politician in to the domestic interior, expecting to shatter the limited domesticity she enjoys there with Senkichi. In this sense, she recognizes the threat to her autonomy that domesticity represents and the unexceptional trope of an affair with an older man becomes an act of resistance to sexual and gender norms.

COMMERCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

One factor which clearly sets these women apart from society is, as already suggested, their wealth. It is this that allows them to pursue a sexual freedom that would have been difficult for the average woman for practical reasons. The characters' own sense of this difference is expressed in their snobbery, but there is an interplay between wealth and class that motivates this snobbery. When differences of class and wealth are intersected by gender and sexual desire, it is not surprising that prostitution should be a prominent motif. In Mishima's stories this motif is deployed as a foil to conventional, socially sanctioned sexual relationships and his characters' experience of, and references to, prostitution become a confirmation of their distance from social convention, while their view of sexual relationships through the lens of prostitution acts as a refusal to domesticate sexual behaviour within the confines of marriage. In *School of the Flesh* this is very much to the fore, since Senkichi is in effect a male prostitute as well as a barman and he himself confirms to Taeko that he has slept with men and women for money. In the world of the *Hyacinth* we meet the two aspects of a paradigm for same-sex desire that Mishima seemed to reject or avoid previously – prostitution and gender ambivalence – but here it is a woman who has to deal with the confusion that arises. In fact, the story of their relationship is a gender reversal of the familiar story of a male patron buying out a woman from her life in the water trade, the *shōbai onna* with whom Hirabayashi Taiko complained (in the *Gunzō* roundtable) male writers were obsessed.

In Taeko's mind, the interplay of class and money is obsessive. We first see her at the party of a European ambassador, to which she has been invited along with other members of the

prewar Japanese aristocracy, with which the ambassador is fascinated. Her only real interest in these fossils is economic – she has the opportunity to flatter the women in order to gain their custom for her boutique. The aristocrats are a hollowed-out vestige of something that no longer exists. This justifies her treating them as fodder for her commercial activity, which would otherwise seem vulgar by comparison. What sets Taeko apart from most of them is that they are no longer wealthy. When, on their second date, she takes Senkichi to an expensive nightclub, she bumps into one of the old ex-nobles from the ambassador's party. The class positions of Taeko and Senkichi are already ironically reversed because, whereas on their first date she dressed up and he was scruffy, this time she has dressed down and he has surprised her by wearing an impeccable English suit, which, we are told, he wears better than the son of a rich family would. His ability to choose from the menu at the expensive restaurant she takes him to is a result of previous visits with Western clients, so his smart appearance is explicitly linked to his sexual availability – he's a relatively high-class whore. When she sees the ex-marquis at the nightclub, he is in the party of a nouveau riche from his part of the country (a native of what would have been his family's feudal domain – he addresses the marquis as *tonosama*). She wonders how he can lower himself: 'No, having lost any such self-respect long ago, the marquis was probably just pleased to be able to come for free to a luxurious nightclub, to which he had never been before' (MZ 9: 34). So the marquis prostituting his class for money stands, in this scene, as a foil for the boy prostituting his sexuality/body for money. In the narrative, class and sex are on equal terms. Taeko has both class and money and, while she obsesses about class and looks down on the marquis for selling his class for money, she seems unbothered by

effectively buying sex from Senkichi. Clearly, therefore, what concerns Taeko is not the principle of selling class or sex for money, but one's position in this relation of power; what horrifies her is the loss of autonomy implied by being the seller.

It is interesting to note how Fukuda's article in *Fujin kōron* also betrays a nagging concern with class, in its rejection of the idea that a career is better than the life of a housewife:

I can't help thinking that behind this kind of thinking there lies some kind of inferiority complex towards a career. Or you could call it a consumer complex towards so-called production. It's something like the complex that the sons and daughters of wealthy families tend to have towards maids or drivers – or the labouring classes in general, who are even poorer.' (Fukuda: 201)

Fukuda sees a parallel between the relationship of women without a job (housewives) to working men and that of people without a job (the rich) to the working class, mixing up class, gender and economics in a way that is suggestive of Mishima. However, whereas Fukuda gestures towards materialism to justify an imagined psychological complex that prevents women from seeing the true value of domesticity, Mishima's materialism recognizes the concern for autonomy that links class and sexual relations. He allows his (contemporary, female) reader to identify imaginatively, through Taeko, with a degree of sexual and economic autonomy not generally available in reality. In Umesao's article, discussed above, in which he describes the changed role of wives as analogous to prostitution, we see contemporary debate recognizing the effect of economic and social change on the nature of relationships and sexuality, as well as showing the continued importance of prostitution as a symbol. It is precisely this subordinate position of wife that Taeko resists, asserting her autonomy as the buyer in a sexual relationship – that with Senkichi – coded as prostitution.

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In *School of the Flesh*, commercial sex structures the narrative in that Taeko pays for Senkichi before losing him to a younger woman, Satoko, whom he wants to marry for her money, and whose parents want him for other reasons – having introduced Senkichi socially as her ‘nephew,’ Taeko agrees in the end to the request of Satoko’s parents that she officially adopt him, so that Satoko can marry the son of a baroness. Prostitution also recurs in the narrative as a motif and as a site of tension. For Taeko, as for Setsuko in *The Wavering of Virtue*, pregnancy is a significant worry and, the first time she sleeps with Senkichi, she broaches the subject very plainly. When she produces a condom, his reaction is: ‘You are well prepared! I’m surprised. With that, you’re no different from a *panpan*’ (MZ 9: 439). *Panpan* is the term for prostitute that came into use in the immediate postwar period to refer specifically to women who served the occupation forces. So in this instance, where she is buying time with him, he is nevertheless resisting his characterization as a prostitute by trying to force the identity onto her. The reader already knows, though, that he is available for cash, because of Teruko’s remarks. After the event, Taeko offers him money, but he refuses:

‘I don’t need it,’ said Senkichi quite definitely.

‘Why not?’

‘Because it was good for me too.’

‘It makes you less attractive if you say you don’t need it.’ (445-46)

He does take her money in the end – not for sex, but in return for his address, phone number and agreement to meet on his next day off. For this Taeko gives him ¥25,000, not just the ¥5,000 suggested by Teruko. Taeko and Senkichi effectively contest the power relation

inherent in their sexual relationship, using the language of prostitution to establish who is in charge and who is subordinate, who is buying and who is bought, and Taeko's ability to pay over the odds makes it quite clear that she will not give up her autonomy. By contrast with most contemporary fictional accounts of prostitution – the stories of *shōbai onna* that Hirabayashi Taiko identified (in the *Gunzō* discussion) as an obsessive interest of male authors – here the figure of sex for money serves to make the woman agent of her own desire.

The image of prostitution figures in *Kyōko's House* as one of the elements of sexuality in opposition to the conventions and mediocrity of middle-class society. In this sense, it stands alongside Mrs. Yamakawa's aristocratic voyeurism and Osamu's violent, masochistic realization of his narcissistic desires at the hands of an ugly older woman as a motif by which the narrative rejects conformity and subverts the objectives that contemporary Japanese ideology valued most highly. As a successful young businessman, Seiichirō is, on the surface, the character closest to the contemporary ideal of middle-class industriousness and material ambition. Not only is there a contrast between others' impression of him and his own internal motivations, but Seiichirō works hard to produce the appearance of an 'ordinary' young man ambitious for a good marriage and a successful career, while in fact holding firmly to his belief in the imminent destruction of the world and taking delight in the mismatch between this inner conviction and people's perception of him. The clearest sign of his material success is his marriage to the daughter of the company's vice president, the features of which speak loudly of material success: it takes place at the Meiji Memorial Hall, with the reception at the Imperial

Hotel and with an ex-prime minister as go-between. The guests on his side are not his friends from Kyōko's house, but old school friends and teachers, whom he never sees and for whom he feels no affection. His wedding is designed to be something which he 'considers to have no connection with himself' (MZ 7: 185). The appearance of his marriage as the epitome of respectability is thus treated ironically and the image of prostitution is used to subvert the respectability of the marriage itself: at the climax of the wedding ceremony, when the *miko* approaches the couple with the ceremonial sake bottle, Seiichirō identifies her bright clothes and makeup with those of a prostitute. The final paragraph of the wedding scene is this:

'In Shinjuku 2-chōme, in that second bar on the right as you go in, I can't remember the name of the bar or of the girl, but wasn't there a girl just like this one?' thought Seiichirō. In that instant, he felt he caught a glimpse of the faint, dark ring distantly encircling the whole world, from the brothel all the way to the ordinary family. (193)

The 'ordinary family' (*seken-nami no katei*) that was the unequivocal focus of ideological and political endeavour is rendered equivalent to its social opposite, the brothel, and marriage as the locus of acceptable sexuality is conflated with prostitution, which was the target of contemporary moral and political opprobrium.¹ The control of prostitution was one of the ways in which the gradual establishment of the salaried middle-class family as the legitimate unit of Japanese society extended into the realm of sexuality, safeguarding the status of marriage as the only legitimate expression of desire. In Seiichirō's wedding, Mishima thus undermines the representation of sexuality at its most respectable – along with the social and

¹ A Bill for the control of prostitution was introduced in 1954 by the Yoshida cabinet, which is mentioned as falling on the day of Seiichirō's wedding, and this became the Prostitution Prevention Law (*Baishun bōshi hō*) that became effective in 1957, the year before the first publication of *Kyōko's House*, bringing an end to legalized prostitution. See Mackie: 137.

political capital invested in it – with the shadow of its newly illegal opposite.

Seiichirō is also prompt to make a connection with prostitution on the occasion of Shunkichi's first professional boxing match. He is blunt enough to ask Shunkichi what his prize money is:

It was ten thousand yen, which Seiichirō said was a fairly reasonable rate, but the extravagant women were not convinced. They were silently comparing it with the amount they would charge if they were in the position of having to sell their bodies for a night.

Then Seiichirō, who had immediately guessed what they were thinking, teased them: 'That's your economic prejudice. What's wrong with ten thousand yen? In the past you could pay for a man to spill his blood with a five-sen postcard and traditionally you could get it much more cheaply than one night of a woman's body. However much of a lady she is, when a woman hears the price put on a man, she immediately voices an opinion on whether it's cheap or expensive, compared to the price for selling her own body. But apart from that, women don't have a fixed price...

'But as there's no other basis for value, it can't be helped. A man earns money by spilling his blood, and a woman makes her living by selling her body.' (MZ 7: 277)

The very general terms in which Seiichirō makes this assertion suggests that he is describing a general truth, recalling Umesao's contention that the role of women has become that of the prostitute. Seiichirō pursues the comparison by suggesting that the most natural course of events would be for Shunkichi to use his prize money to buy one of the women present and, in spite of their protestations, Mitsuko offers herself up as the prize.

So, at least for Seiichirō, prostitution is an image that readily presents itself, in the context of marriage and also in the context of physical endeavour. In this case, he defines the value of a man in terms of his body – as the financial reward for fighting – and also defines the value of a

woman in terms of her body – as the financial reward for sex – and equates the two. Seiichirō, characterized in criticism as a nihilist, is perhaps better described as a radical materialist. He cuts through all pretence to reveal his friends' motivations as cold, material calculations and to reveal their basic frame of reference as physical and sexual. For the text makes it clear that this comparison of boxing with prostitution is not imagined by Seiichirō, but is one that the women themselves have made. It is also one that is made impersonally in the narrative when Shunkichi later fights for the all-Japan title: the spectators leaving after his victory are compared to customers abandoning a whore (418).

While the narrator of *Confessions of a Mask* assumed the pose of conveying the truth about sex by revealing his true desires, Seiichirō is presented as taking upon himself a similar task in revealing the essential materiality of sex. The association that he instantly perceives in the thoughts of the women after the boxing match and the association with prostitution that his own wedding conjures up in his mind are significant not as revelations of base secrets in contrast with propriety, but as revelations that make clear the material nature of human desire and human relationships. The paradigm of the boxer's relationship with his spectators is seen to be a sexual relationship and the paradigm of all sexual relationships, including marriage, is seen to be prostitution. In the context of the composition of *Kyōko's House*, it can be seen that the character of Seiichirō subverts the dominant values of contemporary society. For, as the character closest to the ideal of middle-class respectability and industry, he adheres to a materialism quite at odds with that which defined family, consumerism and economic growth as the nation's primary goals. His attention to his career is entirely an act, and what underlies it

is his conviction that all will end in global destruction. His very desirable marriage – the most valorized form of sexual relationship, sanctioned by the presence of an ex-prime minister – is attended by the image of what has been marked, in a politically highly visible way by the Prostitution Prevention Law, as the unacceptable form of sexual relationship. In the realm of sexual behaviour – on which, it is suggested, other forms of human behaviour are patterned – the elements of conformity are patterned on, and equalized with, that which contemporary ideology rejects.

DESIRE AND CULTURAL AUTHORITY

We have already seen how a rejection of conformity appears as characters' sense of difference, which may be articulated in terms of social class and expressed as snobbery. Such is the case when Taeko feels herself to be distanced from the other aristocratic relics at the ambassador's party and when Setsuko imagines herself, together with her lover, as threatened by a revolutionary mob in her flight of fancy during the power cut. In both these scenes, the women's sense of difference is explicitly linked to sexual desire. Taeko's disdain for the faded aristocrats at the party leads her to contrast both them and the foreign men present, for whom she also feels a dislike, to the superior charms of young Japanese men of the day. While talking to a young, blond foreigner:

'If it's a question of animality,' thought Taeko, as she gazed at the face of this man, who could certainly be called handsome, 'young men in Japan have a much more animal beauty than Westerners like this. An animal liveness and suppleness, an impassive beauty.' (MZ 9: 395)

Taeko sums up the assembly thus: ' There was no lack of either jewels or perfume here, but there wasn't a trace of modern youthfulness and vitality. And that was exactly what Taeko loved above all else!' (396). Her sense of *difference from* the representatives of her social class is articulated through her *desire for* all that they are not – young, energetic – and the other element of her disdain for the gathering, which is her distaste for foreigners, is also expressed in terms of desire, as she reflects on the superior sexual attraction of young Japanese men. While the nature of Taeko's desire thus motivates a snobbery that rejects even her own class, Setsuko derives sexual pleasure from her identification with her class, but this too involves a conflation of difference with desire, for, although the revolutionary mob threatening her and her lover, Tsuchiya, is only a fantasy, her experience of desire for him is enhanced by her sense of their separation from ordinary society, because of their adulterous relationship and their class.

It may seem contradictory to conflate a sense of difference expressed as snobbery, which is associated with an aggressive assertion of cultural authority, with a rejection of conformity, which would entail a resistance to existing cultural authority. But a recognition of Mishima's focus on precisely the question of cultural authority/power and a restatement of the alternative gender reading suggested by Mishima for Etsuko in *Thirst for Love* may dissolve this apparent contradiction. It would be pointless to assert that the characters of Taeko or Setsuko, or others, somehow are 'in fact' men, but the insistence on difference, distance and separation in their experience of desire strongly suggests that the form of these heterosexual relationships is patterned on homosexuality. It is appropriate here to use the term 'homosexuality,' since it is

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the conceptualization of sexuality as a binary set of possibilities – homo- and hetero- – that establishes same-sex desire as a different, minority desire, so that homo(sexuality) is always the marked term and (hetero)sexuality the unmarked. Within this pattern, same-sex desire can only be experienced or represented as *different*, with the result also that difference itself can be an experience or representation of desire. To the extent that what is marked as different is also established as subordinate, the representation of same-sex desire within this conceptual system necessarily requires a counter-claim to cultural authority, and this counter-claim to cultural authority, which is discussed in the next chapter of this study under the rubric of 'camp', is a pervasive feature of Mishima's fiction. The experience of desire by Taeko, Setsuko, Kyōko (and Seiichirō and Mrs Yamakawa) is consistently articulated as, and motivated by, difference: difference from conventional marriage, from bourgeois respectability, from mediocrity and the middle class, difference in taste and understanding. It is not necessary to see the women among these characters as 'in fact' men to recognize that the representation of the desires of these privileged women is an appearance of the camp turn by which Mishima makes a counter-claim for cultural power in order to represent what cannot otherwise be represented with authority – desire which is not 'straight,' or the homosexual side of the homo/hetero binary.

There are points in *School of the Flesh* at which the 'straight' world of convention is directly contrasted with the world of 'different' desire – of adultery, prostitution and the gay bar – and found to be less honest. The younger woman, Satoko, to whom Taeko loses Senkichi, is the daughter of Mrs Muromachi, a wealthy woman whom Taeko acquires as a customer at the

ambassador's party in the opening scene of the novel. After Senkichi has revealed his wish to marry Satoko, Mrs Muromachi enthusiastically relates to Taeko the scene of Senkichi's 'confession' to her and her husband in which he had told them of his relationship with Taeko. In his speech to the Muromachis, as Mrs Muromachi recounts it, Senkichi keeps referring to Satoko as a 'pure young lady' (*kiyoraka-na ojōsan*) and when Satoko speaks up, she talks of wanting to 'save' Senkichi from this relationship, by making an honest (married) man of him: 'Nobody thinks she's his real aunt. I felt I had to save poor Sen-chan. I wanted to purify this man by my own strength. That will take time. But watch – I'm sure that now Sen-chan will clear up his dark past' (MZ 9: 589). Given that Senkichi left out of his account the fact that he was working in a gay bar and that she knows his motivation for the marriage is money, Taeko is justified in her outrage, when she thinks: 'What's this about 'saving him'?! About purifying him?!' The irony of the Muromachis' attitude is clear and heavy and the terms in which Mr Muromachi shows he has been taken in allow the narrative to satirize the whole notion of propriety: 'I used to think that today's youngsters were a useless bunch, all show, but such straightforwardness, such courage are rare.' Taeko's desire for, and relationship with, Senkichi is presented as more honest than the hypocrisy of his entry into the 'straight' world of marriage. In order to gain the upper hand over Senkichi in this situation, Taeko is forced to turn to Teruko, the bar boy from the *Hyacinth*, and the narrative makes it quite clear that it is only he, the representative of a 'race crawling around in the depths of society,' who can help her (596). Teruko, who is laughed at in the cafe where they meet when he turns up in makeup and a woman's kimono, is, we are told, the only person with whom Taeko feels she can be honest.

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Not only is Taeko's situation retrieved by the least conforming character in the book, but the instrument of this is graphically sexual, for Teruko gives her a package of pornographic photographs of Senkichi and an older man. These do not bring Senkichi back to her but his obsequious attitude, when confronted with the photographs, frees Taeko of any attraction towards him, allowing her to abandon him to Satoko. The content of these pictures is clear:

The photos were, for this sort of thing, good, professional photos, clearly showing the outline of the muscles on Senkichi's sweaty chest, and in the first half of the photos that Taeko slowly pulled out of the envelope there was nothing but Senkichi's naked torso on white sheets. With a sensation of cruelty, Taeko continued to draw the photos out. Suddenly the back of an ugly bald head appeared, large in the foreground, like a bald eagle. The next photo, then the next, all were of various positions with this bald-headed man, whose face was not visible. In all of them Senkichi faced straight into the camera with a frank expression on his face. (600)

These pictures clearly function as a guilty secret, but there is an obvious relish in the way that marginalized sexual behaviour is represented in juxtaposition to the appearance of social conformity – the marriage of a baroness' son to the daughter of a wealthy industrialist. In *The Wavering of Virtue* we have another clear suggestion of unconventional sexual behaviour, this time represented in entirely positive terms. When Setsuko meets Tsuchiya at a seaside hotel in summer, they are, we are told, unable to have sex as she is having her period, but as they embrace an alternative suggests itself to Setsuko:

She suddenly took on a wild air. Then she granted to Tsuchiya, who had never requested it, the caress that her husband had pressed her for but she had stubbornly refused. The odious illusion that she had entertained of it was washed clean away and in this wave of tenderness all became pure and blameless. (MZ 6: 568)

The text makes it clear that Setsuko finds this alternative 'caress' (which is surely a reference to

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oral sex) a passionate and fulfilling experience – one that she felt unable to enjoy in marriage. As in *School of the Flesh*, the narrative entertains the reader with a representation of sexual behaviour that is not straight sex, which is to say: not the reproductive endeavour of a married couple that contemporary ideology valorized. Nor, indeed, is it simply the extramarital philandering with *shōbai onna* that the Gunzō roundtable identified as the staple of much contemporary fiction. Stories of such women, like Ōoka Shōhei's (1909-88) *The Shade of Blossoms* (Kaei, 1958-59), depict the rejection of sexual norms, or at least flouting of middle-class expectations, but the women's marginality, as prostitutes and bar girls, deprives them of the power that Mishima's privileged women enjoy. The destruction of the female protagonist in *The Shade of Blossoms* denies her agency and preserves the power of the male author and male desiring subject. Setsuko, by contrast, realizes her heteroerotic desire in a relationship of which the circumstances are within her own control, and her desire is experienced as different both in its social meaning and in the specifics of its sexual expression. Our glimpse of Senkichi having sex with a man is also allowed by the heteroerotic gaze of a woman whose desire is consistently entwined with rejection of conformity and a sense of her own difference, for it is Taeko who sees the sweat glistening on his chest in the photographs.

I have sought to identify these three stories as heteroerotic narratives, in that the reader is encouraged to identify with female characters in their relationship to male objects of desire, without suggesting that they represent familiar patterns of heterosexual desire. The privileged social context in which the female characters express their desire detaches them from the

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restrictions of sexual conformity, while the recurrence of prostitution as a motif encourages the reader to see desire in material terms which equalize all sexual relationships. Privilege is also an important element of the pervasive sense of difference that is implicated in the experience of desire by both male and female characters. That sense of difference is, in fact, so fundamental to their experience of desire that it suggests Mishima's representations of heteroerotic desire are patterned on a desire which is always marked as different: homosexual desire within a homo-/heterosexual binary. The positive experience of difference leads the characters to reject conformity and mediocrity in terms which mark them as social snobs, but this snobbery is what, combined with the material fact of their privilege, allows them (in material terms) the autonomy and (in narrative terms) the agency to experience sexual difference and to explore the sexual experience of difference.

Five

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The preceding chapter examined aspects of Mishima's representation of women as desiring subjects that suggested analogies with the representation of same-sex desire: the experience of difference as intimately connected to the experience of desire, the valorization of non-standard sexual behaviour, and the concept of a counter-claim to cultural authority. I suggested that the technique by which Mishima borrows the cultural authority of social privilege in order to represent sexual difference could be termed camp. The following discussion looks at several interrelated meanings of camp in relation to Mishima's fiction. First, let us look at how the narrator of *Confessions of a Mask* borrows a different kind of cultural authority to represent his experience of desire.

AGAINST NATURE

The narrator of *Confessions of a Mask*, as discussed in Chapter Two of this study, describes himself as an invert, but does not seem to identify with the feminine image that this implies and he presents a case-study of the development of desire from childhood to adulthood, but ends by denying the inevitability that development must lead to heterosexual desire. What, then, is left for him to articulate his desire? He is left with culture, especially Western (non-Japanese)

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art and literature and a web of references, in which the relevance to same-sex desire is not explicitly stated but to which he alludes in order to gain access to such an alternative articulation of that desire. Whereas the account of reality presented by the scientific discourses of sexology and psychoanalysis offers Kōchan no possibility of fulfilment or self-realization, (Western) art and literature present a fantastic alternative which he can 'realize' in private, as he does for the first time at the age of twelve before the image of St. Sebastian.

Dollimore identifies two modes of discussing sexuality outside normative heterosexuality: the essentialist and the anti-essentialist, for which he takes André Gide and Oscar Wilde respectively as representative examples. 'For Gide transgression is in the name of a desire and identity rooted in the natural, the sincere, and the authentic; Wilde's transgressive aesthetic is the reverse: insincerity, inauthenticity, and unnaturalness become the liberating attributes of decentered identity and desire, and inversion becomes central to Wilde's expression of this aesthetic' (Dollimore 1991: 14). By contrast, Gide is an essentialist: 'For Michel in *The Immoralist* and to an extent for Gide himself, desire may be proscribed but this does not affect its authenticity or its naturalness; if anything it confirms them. It is society which is inauthentic' (15). The essentialist mode came to dominate anglophone lesbian and gay fiction in the late twentieth century, reflecting the political focus of gay communities on establishing a sexual identity that was *given* or inevitable and therefore deserving of acceptance. The focus on authenticity, on the idea of being true to oneself is illustrated by the character of Molly Bolt, the narrator of Rita Mae Brown's *Rubyfruit Jungle*, in which the narrative follows Molly across America in her determined struggle to be true to herself. When first challenged on her sexuality

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by a friend, Molly responds combatively: 'I don't know what I am – polymorphous and perverse. Shit. I don't even know if I'm white. I'm me. That's all I am and all I want to be. Do I have to be something?' (Brown 1973: 107).

In *Confessions of a Mask* Mishima takes both the essentialist and anti-essentialist positions. As the inquirer after the origins of his sexuality, he presents his childhood experiences and the autonomous appearance of his sexual desire almost as a piece of natural history. He is insistent that it is the working of fate, whether in the form of a predetermined nature or through a process of cause and effect (by which his unusual childhood produces an unusual sexuality). However, as a literary narrator with a wide set of references at his disposal, he uses culture as his weapon against nature. In this sense, while the narrator presents us with all the evidence for an essentialist view, which is continuous with the dominant discourses of sexology and psychoanalysis, for him the more satisfying view, to which he alludes again and again, is an anti-essentialist one that takes him outside these discourses by asserting the alternative authority of culture. Starrs recognizes the importance of sexology, but misses the presence of an alternative in the text: 'In an early novel such as *Confessions*, the narrator seems to accept, quite uncritically, the "scientific" approach of modern, Western psychology and psychoanalysis, even using it, like a scalpel, to dissect his own psyche, and seeming to hope for some therapeutic relief thereby' (Starrs 1994: 93). The relief that the narrator seeks is not in scientific therapy, but in culture.

It is significant not just that the narrator of *Confessions of a Mask* makes constant allusion to references outside scientific discourse, but also that he chooses from a specific set of references.

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One area in which critics have discussed the nature of allusion and reference is the question of camp, where queer criticism has built on Susan Sontag's early (1964) attempt to define the concept. Sontag makes a similar distinction to Dollimore's one of essentialist and anti-essentialist in observing that the writings of Cocteau are camp, but those of Gide are not (Sontag 1990: 278). The fact that Sontag's essay was in the form of 'notes' rather than sustained argument illustrates the difficulty of defining the concept, and her notes depend implicitly on the notion that some things *just are* camp. Her list of 'random examples' – 'Zuleika Dobson, Tiffany lamps ... Aubrey Beardsley drawings' – suggests that, when something is camp, simply to name it invokes something (277). What others have specified more explicitly than Sontag is that the 'something' invoked relates to sexual identity (see Ross 1999).

The narrator of *Confessions of a Mask* does a lot of invoking. Early in the novel he is horrified to discover as a child that the handsome knight in his picture book is in fact a woman – Joan of Arc. The passage concludes with a quotation from a verse by Oscar Wilde and a reference to Joris-Karl Huysmans' (1848-1907) *Là-Bas* (1891). In a non-specific way, the child's experience is thus related to late nineteenth-century decadence – a connection which clearly does not arise from the child's experience in itself. This set of associations can only be interpreted as arising from a frame of reference constructed by the adult narrator. In this case the references are to two European writers associated with *fin-de-siècle* Decadence.

Some time after the narrator's attraction to Ōmi has ended and Ōmi has been expelled from school, he is attracted by his athletic classmate Yakumo. When both he and Yakumo are excused from swimming as they are ill, they are made to sunbathe instead, which affords the narrator a

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chance to observe Yakumo's naked body:

I gauged his slender waist and gazed at his stomach as he gently breathed in and out. I couldn't help recalling this line from Whitman:

The young men float on their backs – their white bellies bulge to the sun... (MZ 1: 267)

Here, when the recollection is of late adolescence, the reference to culture is not just an allusion by the adult narrator, but one he remembers as making at the time – 'I couldn't help recalling...' This is the first point in the text where the boy within the narrative, rather than the adult narrator, makes such a reference, showing that he has begun to be aware of the alternative discourse of culture. At around the same age, Kōchan is also attracted to the youngest of his teachers, the geometry instructor and describes one particular day:

Sensual concerns were already devouring my time. As I watched, the young teacher manifested suddenly as a vision of a nude statue of Heracles. When he started to draw a quadratic equation with the chalk in his outstretched right hand while cleaning the blackboard with his left hand, I saw, in the folds of the cloth clinging to his back, the folds in the muscles of *Heracles Drawing the Bow*. I finally indulged in my bad habit in the classroom. (246)

Wilde, Huysmans, Whitman, classical sculpture – these are not only Western cultural references, but references established in a specific, alternative relationship to the normative discourse of sexuality. Allusion to these may be seen as an act of resistance to that normative discourse and the concept of 'camp' can be used to illuminate this process. But why should we see Mishima's quotations and comparisons as anything more than a scattering of learned allusions? Camp, as a critical concept, has been defined and used in a number of ways: as 'a lie that tells the truth' (see Core 1999: 81), as an excessive valorization of the culturally devalued and as exaggeration as a strategy of camouflage. All of these definitions are relevant to the reading of Mishima, but the humorous overtones of these aspects of camp do not sit well with *Confessions of a Mask*.

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They are nevertheless suggestive and should be taken to inform the sense in which the term is used here.

Andrew Ross has examined how it is that some things, as Sontag suggested, 'just are' camp – and for Ross, the 'something' that these things invoke is explicitly related to the expression of a gay male identity in postwar US and British subcultures. Trying to explain the camp effect of Norma Desmond (played by Gloria Swanson) in *Sunset Boulevard* and Baby Jane Hudson (Bette Davis) in *What Ever Happened to Baby Jane?*, both ex-stars of the silent cinema adrift in the postwar world, Ross writes: 'It is the historical incongruity of this displacement [of survivors of the age of screen goddesses into the democratized present] which creates the world of tragic-ironic meanings that camp exploits' (Ross 1999: 311). Ross argues that the camp effect is created when 'the products ... of a much earlier mode of production, which has lost its power to produce and dominate cultural meanings, become available, in the present, for redefinition according to contemporary codes of taste' (312). This displaced use of cultural products gains its camp effect from the ironic recognition that the (earlier) mode of their production no longer has power. What Ross seeks to do is to define camp – to explain what is happening when an allusion is recognized as camp – in relation to the exercise of cultural authority.

Ross explains the expression of camp in the (pre-Stonewall) gay male fascination with Hollywood stars like Judy Garland and Joan Crawford as the expression of a subjectivity 'through imaginary or displaced relations to the images and discourses of a straight, 'parent' culture.' For a subculture denied direct expression in the parent culture, this appropriation of images and other cultural products allows its practitioners 'to suggest an imaginary control

over circumstances' (323).

Mishima's allusions and quotations in *Confessions of a Mask* are to a very different set of cultural products to those discussed by Ross and their purpose is clearly not to achieve a 'camp' effect in any humorous sense. It is possible, though, to see a kind of tragic irony, a kind of humourless camp in Mishima's displacement of Western classical myth and *fin-de-siècle* literature into the narrative present. The appropriation of the products of another, dominant mode of cultural production (from elsewhere and another time) is what is shared by Mishima and it is this that may be identified as camp. This act of appropriation is in both cases an exercise of cultural power, or rather a counter-claim to cultural power on behalf of an excluded subjectivity. It is difficult, given Mishima's canonical status, to associate him with 'a counter-claim to cultural power.' However, the representation of same-sex desire in *Confessions of a Mask* is a representation which, in its historical context, could not claim any kind of immediate cultural authority. Whereas a character like Molly Bolt in *Rubyfruit Jungle*, the product of a very different historical context, can speak with the authority of a self-evident authenticity, Kōchan rejects authenticity in favour of a borrowed authority. The narrator's process of allusion allows an appropriation of cultural authority for the expression of a non-dominant subject position: that of the invert as something other than the object of scientific enquiry. While the text is marked by the authority of sexological and psychoanalytical accounts of same-sex desire, the use of allusion represents a challenge to that authority.

SPEAKING IN DIFFERENT VOICES

Reading Mishima's fiction as camp allows us to see a number of strategies at work in his texts that are a function of the expression of a non-dominant subject position. Here Bakhtin's notion of dialogism is useful, with its emphasis on the heteroglot nature of literary language (see Allen 2000: 27-30). Dialogism draws attention to the joint role of writer and reader, imagined as speaker and addressee, in producing meaning. However, in the case of Mishima, it also helps to consider the *multiplicity of addressees* and to understand this it is useful to look at the operation of camp in its comedic role. The BBC radio comedy programme *Round the Horne*, broadcast between 1965 and 1968, featured the characters Julian and Sandy (played by Kenneth Williams and Hugh Paddick), who entertained a mainstream audience while simultaneously speaking outrageously to a minority (gay) audience. The comic effect of their dialogue depended partly on their effeminate manner and veiled references to homosexuality, but their appeal to their minority audience lay in their frequent use of gay slang and a second tier of references which seemed to pass unnoticed by the wider audience, as the varying volume of laughter on the original recordings indicates. So, when posing as second-hand clothes dealers, Julian and Sandy raise an easy laugh in the studio when they announce that they have two shops: one in Queensway and one in Mincing Lane; or when they say they are 'interested in anything reasonable in gentlemen's clothes' (Took and Feldman 1992). When, as lawyers, they say they have 'got a criminal practice that takes up most of our time' the audience is much slower to react, presumably as not all of its members would have taken this as a reference to (illegal) sexual activity, while the boast that 'he's a miracle of dexterity at the cottage upright'

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apparently was taken at face value by most of the audience as a reference to piano playing, rather than assignations in a public toilet.

In the case of Julian and Sandy, the script makes use of two levels of meaning, both characterized by secrecy – in one case an open secret (because the audience is aware of the unstated fact that the men are gay) and in the other a disguised dialogue with a minority audience. It is not unreasonable to see both these levels of meaning at work in Mishima's fiction. Open secrets play a very significant part in his stories – open in that they are shared by the reader – while there are points where Mishima seems to be saying different things to different readers at the same time.

It has already been observed (in Chapter One) how *Confessions of a Mask* and *Forbidden Colours* stand out from earlier Japanese representations of same-sex desire in figuring that desire as a secret. The significance of this is seen in the repeated appearance of secrets as narrative devices throughout Mishima's fiction, in particular where the secret is a hidden desire. In the discussion of *Music* in Chapter Two, we saw how the psychoanalyst's treatment of Reiko was portrayed as the successive unfolding of multiple layers of secrets, in order to arrive finally at the truth of Reiko's desire (to carry her brother's baby). In one particular segment of the novel – Reiko's relationship with the suicidal and impotent young man, Hanai – the trope of the secret is used in a curiously suggestive way. Having discovered that the cause of Hanai's suicidal urge is his impotence, she appears to save him by declaring her own impotence (*funō*, to which the novel refers elsewhere as her 'frigidity' – *reikanshō*) and impressing Hanai with the celebratory tone of her confession:

'Within your body there lies a single black pearl, and within my body a single white pearl,' said Reiko,

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as if she was singing. Hanai was strangely inspired by the existence of such a woman and was moved by the strength of character that had turned misfortune into a matter of pride. As he listened to her, the idea of dying gradually came to seem ridiculous. (MZ 11: 126)

In this scene of mutual self-revelation, which it is difficult not to see now as a kind of displaced 'coming out,' Reiko seems to find strength (expressed in her lyrical reference to the 'pearl') in finding that Hanai shares her sexual dysfunction and Hanai is so struck by her pride (*hokori*) in it that he no longer wants to kill himself. Although it is anachronistic to call this experience a 'coming out,' it is not unreasonable to imagine a subset of the novel's readership recognizing the experience of pleasurable surprise on finding someone who shares their status as a sexual minority, nor is it too far-fetched to see this secondary meaning as intended by the author.

The secret of true desire structures the narrative of *Forbidden Colours*, causing several dramatic reversals: principally Mrs. Kaburagi's discovery of her husband's secret life when she finds him having sex with Yūichi and the letter to Yūichi's mother and wife that informs them of his secret life in the world of café *Rudon*, a crisis which is solved by the revelation of the false secret that he has been having an affair with Mrs. Kaburagi. There is a suggestion that an end to secrecy and a realization of his true self would help Yūichi, when he tells Shunsuke that he wants his wife to abort their child, to avoid them being tied together for life, saying that Yasuko has 'suffered enough.' He goes on to admit that he, too, is suffering and his excitement at this point suggests that he has found something genuine in his passion to live the life he has discovered at *Rudon*:

'What do you want to happen to you if you divorce Yasuko?'

'I want to be free. To tell the truth, I don't really know myself why it is that I have been doing as you say. I feel sad when I think I might be a person without a will of my own.'

As he said this to himself this ordinary, artless statement came gushing out and finally turned into an

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urgent cry. This is what the young man said:

'I just want to be. I want to actually exist.'

Shunsuke listened carefully. It seemed as though he were hearing the sound of his work of art weep for the first time. Yūichi added miserably:

'I'm tired of secrets.' (MZ 3: 197)

Although Yūichi does not voluntarily yield up his secrets to his family, the possibility is hinted at here that if he were to allow the secret of his desire to erupt into reality, the result would be a real existence, something like the 'wholeness' at which Reiko's desires aim in *Music*. At one point a celebration of secrecy appears in *Forbidden Colours*, in an episode related at the second 'gay party' held by Jackie:

Kimichan told an interesting story. The owner of a certain fruit shop in Shinjuku had demolished a barracks building after the war and in the construction of a two-story permanent structure he had attended the ground-breaking ceremony as head of the firm. He lifted the *sakaki* branch with a serious expression and then a director of the firm, an attractive young man, did the same. What the others did not know was that this perfectly normal ceremony was actually a *secret wedding* held in front of everyone. The two men, who had long been lovers, were moving in together from the evening of that ceremony, the owner's divorce one month earlier having now been completed. (419)

This ceremony, an ordinary Shinto ground-breaking ceremony to most of the onlookers, but simultaneously a wedding ceremony for the two men involved, enacts the double meaning presented by a text/utterance with multiple addressees.

THE HIDEOUS TRUTH

If Yūichi seems to suspect that a new, more real existence might be possible if he could bring an end to his secrets, the suggestion elsewhere in Mishima's fiction is rather that hidden desires could wreak havoc if they emerged into reality. That is certainly the implication of the series of

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encounters between Kazuo and the nine year-old Fusako in 'The Locked Room', as discussed in Chapter Three of this study, where the intersection of Kazuo's sexual excitement in the girl's presence with the bloody fantasies from his dreams threatens terrible consequences. The fantasies of Kōchan in *Confessions of a Mask* would also be destructive if realized.

Another complex engagement with desire and secrets is found in *Play of the Beasts*. The opening scene of the novel focuses on the discrepancy between reality and appearance, describing a photograph of the three people around whom the narrative unfolds. Kōji, Yūko and Ippei are stood by the sea in summer, looking happy. However, the first line has already told us that 'it is hard to imagine that this picture was taken just a few days before the final terrible incident' (MZ 8: 459). The narrative proper begins with Kōji's release from prison and arrival at the village on the Izu peninsula where Yūko now lives with her husband, Ippei, and runs a garden nursery business. Two years earlier Kōji, a young student, had started working at Ippei's ceramics shop in Ginza. The narrative shifts back to the earlier period: out drinking one evening, Ippei tells Kōji how frustrating it is that, try as he might, he cannot make his wife jealous. Kōji becomes close to Yūko and, six months later, she has Kōji commission a private detective's report on her husband. The report details Ippei's numerous affairs, including his regular mistress. However, Yūko is insistent that Kōji should not reveal to Ippei that she has this information – Ippei must not know that she knows: 'Just don't tell my husband about this. [...] Please, please keep it secret. If you betray me, I will die' (491). The irony of Yūko's words – 'if you betray me, I will die' – is clear; she addresses them not to the unfaithful husband, to whom one might expect such a plea to be directed, but to Kōji, who she insists must keep the

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secret of her knowledge of the secret.

Kōji encourages Yūko to confront her husband, but when she does there is just an embarrassed silence. When Yūko eventually starts sobbing, Ippei hits her, at which point Kōji bludgeons Ippei with a spanner and it is this attack that puts Kōji in prison. Upon his release, he goes to work for Yūko, who now looks after the brain-damaged Ippei as well as running the new business. In a series of scenes, Yūko attempts to have Ippei discover her with Kōji, which Kōji resists. The novel ends with the news that, a few days after the photograph was taken showing the three of them together, Kōji and Yūko handed themselves into the police for having strangled Ippei, apparently at Ippei's own request, and that Kōji was executed for the crime.

So, while the first part of *Play of the Beasts* is centered on the wife's secret knowledge of the husband's secret affairs, the second half follows her attempts to reveal to her husband the secret of a sexual relationship with Kōji, which is a relationship that Yūko wishes but does not have – Kōji in fact has a sexual relationship with a girl in the village, Kimi. The 'true' secret of the novel is not the conventional one of adultery, but the explosive force of Kōji's passionate responses to the interplay of the married couple's secrets and revelations, responses which first cripple and then kill Ippei. The focus on the destructive power of realized desire is maintained by a subplot involving the girl Kimi, who refuses to see her father, Teijirō. Kōji eventually learns the reason for her hatred of him: when Kimi was a child, and shortly after her mother had died, Teijirō had raped her. Having made this confession, Teijirō then adds to it by showing Kōji a pornographic photograph of two teenagers having sex. As Teijirō points out to

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him with evident satisfaction, the girl in the picture looks just like Kimi (560).

The overwhelming impression of *Play of the Beasts* is that what appear to be 'normal' relationships may be entirely perverse. In this sense, the deployment of secrets within Mishima's text functions here, and elsewhere, as an ironic revelation of the truth. Much is often made of the status of the 'mask' in the title of *Confessions of a Mask*, but this ironic function of secrets suggests that we should be prepared to see the proliferation of masks, in various forms, in Mishima's fiction in relation to Phillip Core's sense of 'the lie that tells the truth'. The idea of the mask, or of the acting of a role, recurs frequently in Mishima, but is often tied to such an ironic revelation of the truth. In *Kyōko's House*, the young businessman Seiichirō is portrayed as acting the part of an ordinary careerist salary man, but it is clear from the start that this is only a mask. Among the 'mottos' he creates for himself are the following:

One must swear absolute allegiance to that which one despises – to habit, if one despises habit; to public opinion, if one despises public opinion.

The conventional must be one's highest virtue. (MZ 7: 53-54)

Yet it is Seiichirō, the wearer of this mask, who has the greatest insights into truth. He experiences the sensation of being a transcendent god thanks to his knowledge of Frank's sexuality (see Chapter Four above) and it is he who is allowed to see the truth of human desire at the orgy to which Mrs. Yamakawa invites him in New York.

STAGING AUTHORITY

Seiichirō's encounter with Mrs. Yamakawa exhibits another operation of camp: the use of exaggeration. It has already been noted that the two characters are drawn together, in spite of

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the social distance that should exist between them, because they recognize 'something' in each other. The vague something that is detectable in Seiichirō's encounters with Mrs. Yamakawa becomes more tangible if we recognize her as a camp character, both in the conventional sense of camp, with its humorous connotation, and in the critical sense outlined above. With her aging elegance, self-assured hauteur and conspiratorial air – all encapsulated in the scratch of her diamond ring on Seiichirō's hand – she comes across as something akin to a grand old drag queen. For the 'drag,' that is to say, parodic representation of femininity depends on two elements: exaggeration and the paradigm of the open secret. In the context of a drag performance, the effect of the representation requires that the audience be in on the 'secret' that the woman is, in fact, a man. This is not, let it be clear, to suggest that Mrs. Yamakawa is in some sense a man (as Mishima suggested that Etsuko in *Thirst for Love* was), but that Mishima's representation of her partakes of these elements of exaggeration and the open secret. Her appearance and manner – above all, the diamond ring – exaggerate both her femininity and her wealth, while her introduction to the reader is inseparable from the secret of her disdain for the company in which she finds herself at the party, which she readily reveals to Seiichirō, mocking their hostess's culinary efforts and describing the party as 'absurd' (*kudaranai*, 484). She leads Seiichirō further into the realm of secrecy, and outrageous exaggeration, by inviting him to the orgy.

The camp effect (in a critical sense) of the drag performance derives from the acting of an inappropriate aristocratic role; as in the case of the camp significance of Hollywood icons discussed above, this can be described as a displaced relation, a claiming for oneself of cultural

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power by borrowing it from somewhere else, thus allowing an imaginary control over social reality. The use of aristocratic characters by Mishima is analogous – the inappropriateness is that Mrs. Yamakawa does not belong in the postwar world where she is depicted, but rather in the prewar high society of her younger years. There is a clear contrast between her and the foreigners at the dinner party where Seiichirō first meets her, who are portrayed as vulgar, or the middle class company functionaries, portrayed as petty and obsequious. This displacement contributes to the camp effect of her interactions with Seiichirō, as she invites him to be in on the secret of her character and opinions as well as the more material secret of the 'secret party,' while the suggestiveness of Mishima's narrative invites the reader to be in on the secret, too.

When Seiichirō discusses with Mrs. Yamakawa his wife's affair with Frank, during which she says that 'women should learn more from *nanshoku-ka*', here, too, cultural power is ascribed to Mrs. Yamakawa in a way that is camp. Mrs. Yamakawa herself is not borrowing anything – she is an authentic aristocrat, which is the point of her disdain for the middle-class company men. But the text is borrowing her cultural authority in order to cast sexual relations and behaviour in a different light, so that we see: the heterosexual, middle class norm as mediocre; the outrageous behaviour of the orgy as amusing rather than shocking; and men who desire men as instructive for women's sexuality. This designation of male-male desire as valuable and instructive is made more authoritative by Mrs. Yamakawa's choice of vocabulary: the older, native Japanese term *nanshoku-ka* rather than any of the more current terms available. This may be taken as simply a reflection of her age, but the implications of tradition and social

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acceptability that the term carries suggest that there is a concern in the text to lend authority to Mrs. Yamakawa's judgment. By a similar operation, in *School of the Flesh* the text also borrows cultural authority for its non-normative representation of desire from the protagonist, Taeko's position of social privilege. As a baroness, she lends extra weight to her rejection of conformity and her final reliance on the marginal figure of Teruko.

It may seem strange that exaggeration, the narrative deployment of secrets and the (arguably) parodic representation of femininity should serve to give authority to a text. Nevertheless, these elements are not infrequently present in representations of same-sex desire when those representations involve what I have referred to above as the expression of a non-dominant subject position. Andrew Holleran's 1978 novel *Dancer From the Dance* follows the lives of gay men in New York in the burgeoning subculture of the late 1960s and early 1970s. Exaggeration, and in particular an exaggerated femininity, not least in the portrayal of one of the two main characters, the drag queen Sutherland, are deployed throughout the novel in the expression of such a subject position. It uses religious metaphor, and the language of, and references to, Italian Catholicism in order to cast the characters' hedonistic lifestyle in culturally 'higher' terms. Their experiences of sexual excess and disco dancing are presented in terms of devotion, worship, 'angels' and a single-minded search for a life outside social norms. So we are told that the men devoted to the scene 'moved with the regularity of the Pope from the city to Fire Island in the summer' (Holleran 1993: 111) and later that 'some of the dancers are on drugs and enter the discotheque with the radiant faces of the Magi coming to the Christ Child' (115). This exaggerated use of Catholic imagery is not without irony, since it models

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same-sex desire on that which most rejects it, but the element of exaggeration is essential, as well as ironic, because the non-dominant subject cannot simply adopt authority. It can only enact, or act out, an authoritative role by a mechanism such as exaggeration. Thus, Kōchan in *Confessions of a Mask* cannot simply assert his desire under the weight of sexological and psychoanalytical definitions of that desire. In order to express it he must enlarge it by recasting it as Greek myth. Seiichirō's experience of the orgy is given greater significance by the grand presence of Mrs. Yamakawa.

If it is possible to see Mrs. Yamakawa's portrayal as relating to femininity by the same mechanism of exaggeration as a drag performance, we can also detect in this the ludic element inherent in such a performance. These two elements are also to be found in Mishima's short story 'The Pearl' (*Shinju*, 1963). In this comedy of manners, revolving around the loss by Mrs. Sasaki of a pearl on the occasion of her birthday, the mixture of exquisite politeness and hateful recrimination attendant upon the loss and mysterious reappearance of the item of jewellery is delightfully exaggerated, culminating in an outpouring of anger between Mrs. Yamamoto and Mrs. Matsumura. When Mrs. Yamamoto resolves the situation by eating the replacement pearl, Mrs. Matsumura can only watch in amazement

In no time at all, the lady picked up the pearl on the table and, displaying an extraordinary resolution, threw it into her mouth, whereupon she took up her teacup by its handle, her elegant little finger held aloft, and washed it down into her throat in one go, along with her cold tea. [...] Her manner had about it precisely the sense of irrevocability that one would expect in someone who has drunk poison. [...]

For a while the two ladies held hands and cried, then swore to each other that from then on they would be the best of friends. (MZ 20: 164)

The women's speech and behaviour throughout this story is just on the border of parody. In

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this case, no subversive expression of desire is attempted, but nevertheless the exaggeration is significant and returns us to the multiplicity of addressees observed earlier and so to the expression of a non-dominant subject position.

In the speech and actions of the women in 'The Pearl', we have, at one level, standard language and only slightly exaggerated behaviour for women of their class and age. However, we also have it presented as a way of speaking and behaving in a text from the pen of a male author. Just as a drag performer reproduces the speech and mannerisms of a woman, so that it becomes the denaturalized speech and performance of a man drawing attention to his gender, so Mishima here represents the women's speech and actions as a camp performance. It is, of course, not at all unusual for male writers to write dialogue for female characters, but what alerts us to the camp performance is, as in the case of the drag artist, the element of exaggeration. The distinction is that between transvestism and drag. While the male author, putting words in the mouth of his female characters in the hope that they will successfully pass as the words of a woman, is generally engaged in textual transvestism, Mishima in 'The Pearl' makes no attempt to pass, but calls attention to his performance by its exaggeration.

The expression of an identity is a complex matter. The attention to distinctions of surface and depth, appearance and reality, masks, secrets and performance in Mishima's fiction shows that no one was more aware of this than he. Whether by allusion, irony or exaggeration, Mishima made full use of the mechanisms of camp to produce his anti-essentialist representations of desire.

Six

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A NEW SUBJECT: THE NANSHOKU-KA

The second of Mishima's novels to focus on same-sex desire, *Forbidden Colours*, shares with the first, *Confessions of a Mask*, a network of allusions to, and appropriations of, earlier representations of desire between men. As in *Confessions of a Mask*, the allusions are mainly to the literature of nineteenth-century Europe and the Western classical tradition, but these are also intertwined with references to the Japanese literary tradition to an extent not seen in the earlier novel. An understanding of these allusions, and of the way that they encode aspects of the novel, points to a decisive shift in Mishima's writing and a new relationship between his desiring subjects and the world.

In relation to the first of these sets of allusions, Mishima's literary interest in Europe has been much discussed¹ and Irmela Hijiya-Kirschnereit has described the resemblances between *Forbidden Colours* and Thomas Mann's (1875-1955) *Death in Venice* (*Der Tod in Venedig*, 1912). She focuses on the similarity between Shunsuke and Aschenbach, the protagonist of Mann's novel, especially in the description of Shunsuke at the beginning of *Forbidden Colours* and the

¹ In addition to Hijiya-Kirschnereit, see in particular Cecchi 1999.

action which begins the novel: both 'leave the place of their work, the scene of their chaste struggle, and, in a time of severe summer heat, set out to the sea' (Hijiya-Kirschner: 313), where they encounter a beautiful young man whose beauty is evoked by reference to Greek myth. She also argues that *Forbidden Colours* shares with *Death in Venice* allusions to Plato's *Symposium* and *Phaidros*, casting the older man in each novel as Socrates. However she sees in these borrowings from Mann and the repeated classical allusions only Mishima's 'constant striving for a synthesis of this European learning and the Japanese tradition' (316). What is missing from Hijiya-Kirschner's analysis is a recognition of the use to which these allusions are put. The Socratic tone of Shunsuke's musings on art, spirit and beauty and the paradigm which this suggests for his relationship with Yūichi undergird his growing realization of his love for the younger man and provide a framework for its expression not available in contemporary accounts of desire between men. Indeed the network of allusions and appropriations plays a critical role in structuring the relationships and patterns of desire between men that are the focus of the novel.

Hijiya-Kirschner's article, in focussing on *Forbidden Colours* alone, also misses the comparisons to be drawn between it and *Confessions of a Mask* and the development between the earlier and the later novel indicated by the different use Mishima makes of this allusive network. Whereas in *Confessions of a Mask* this network validates the expression of same-sex desire only in the context of the narrator's fantasy, in *Forbidden Colours* it is deployed in relation to both fantasy and actual sexual relationships. The narrator's fantasies scarcely come into contact with external reality in the earlier novel, but their continued presence throughout the

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narrative insists on the reality of his desires. In *Confessions of a Mask*, as already suggested, Mishima ends by denying the inevitability of development from homosexual to heterosexual desire when, in the final scene, his attention strays from Sonoko, who is stood next to him, to a young man stood in the sun, whom his imagination sees involved in a fight and pierced with a knife. The persistence of the narrator's fantasy wins out over reality.

However, in *Forbidden Colours* there is a harsher encounter with reality. This confronts both Yūichi, who must negotiate a path for his sexual relationships within the confines of society, and Shunsuke, who must face his realisation of his desire for Yūichi. Yūichi survives by a compromise with heterosexuality in the forms of Mrs Kaburagi and his child, while Shunsuke cannot survive the impossibility of his desire for Yūichi. For both men, though, the fantasy elaborated by the narrative's network of allusion is fundamental in allowing expression of their desire.

Mishima's allusions in *Confessions of a Mask*, I have suggested, function as an appropriation of cultural authority for the expression of a non-dominant subject position: that of the invert as something other than the object of scientific inquiry. *Forbidden Colours* presents the same appropriation (of elements of the European literary tradition) joined by another one – that of earlier Japanese discourse from the medieval and Edo periods – to express another subject position: that of the *nanshoku-ka*. It is with this word that the denizens of the café *Rudon* are introduced and defined in the seventh chapter of the novel (MZ 3: 118). It is as *nanshoku* rather than *tōsaku* (inversion) that the narrative describes same-sex desire and it is mostly as *nanshoku-ka* that the narrative and the characters of the novel describe the men of the society

into which Yūichi enters, although they are also described as '*kono michi no hitotachi*' ('people of this sort [literally: way]') and occasionally *gei/gay* (notably in the case of the 'gay party' at Ōiso, where foreigners play a conspicuous part). Several distinctions arise from this choice of terminology. Firstly, the use of *nanshoku* rather than the equally current *dōseiai* (homosexuality) suggests an attention to specifically Japanese patterns of behaviour and a recognition of the historicity of the behaviour/identity described, rather than modern medical categorization. The use of *dōseiai* in contemporary journalism was generally in the context of homosexuality as the object of medical or psychological enquiry, as in articles with titles such as '*Dōseiai wa chiryō dekiru ka*' ('Can homosexuality be cured?' Imanishi 1952) and '*Dōseiai higi wo saguru*' ('In search of the secrets of homosexuality,' Itō 1951) both published in the monthly magazine *Ningen tankyū* (Exploration of Humanity). *Nanshoku* generally appears in investigations of either same-sex desire and sexual practices of the Japanese past, as in Iwata Jun'ichi's series of articles entitled '*Honchō nanshoku kō*' ('A Study of *Nanshoku* in Our Realm') published in *Ningen tankyū* beginning in June 1952, or of contemporary Japanese social reality, as in the article on male prostitution entitled '*Nanshoku kaidō wo yuku*' ('Walking the path of *nanshoku*') published in the October 1947 edition of *Ryōki*. Secondly, although the use of the word *nanshoku-ka* to describe a person produces a modern focus on the individual which was not necessarily implied by the (earlier, pre-Meiji) use of *nanshoku* to describe a type of pleasure or system of relationships, the choice of *nanshoku* over *dōseiai* and the use of the phrase '*kono michi no hito(tachi)*' match the attention given in *Forbidden Colours* to patterns of relationship in the real world, rather than just a (theoretical) category of person – the invert of *Confessions*

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of a Mask. It might also be argued that the term *nanshoku-ka* is more affirmative, in that the suggestion of a way of pleasure implies agency on the part of its practitioners, rather than rendering them objects of a scientific gaze. It is significant that '*dōseiai*' is used in *Forbidden Colours* when the men are observed by others; as Kawada and Yūichi walk down the street arm-in-arm, a young couple spot them and identify them by the term:

'Hey, they must be *dōseiai*.'

'Oh, how awful' (329)

This new subject, the *nanshoku-ka*, subsumes, and is expressed in, two paradigms: the Greek and the Japanese. Although these are to be distinguished, it is worth noting that contemporary discourse could conflate the two, so that an article on same-sex desire in classical Greece published in 1947 could be entitled '*Girishajin no koi – nanshoku no kotodomo*' ('The love of the Greeks – some things about *nanshoku*,' Tominaga 1947). Significantly, both the Greek and the Japanese paradigms of same-sex desire between males are patterned on intergenerational relationships (the *erastês* and *erōmenos* of classical Greece and the *nenja* and *wakashu* of Edo-period Japan), a pattern which largely defines the course of Yūichi's relationships and maps the tragedy of Shunsuke's desire for Yūichi. In tension with this intergenerational same-sex paradigm are two ideas at work within the narrative: the possibility of a more egalitarian relationship between men and the heteronormative reality which erases both possibilities completely.

McLelland notes the coexistence in Meiji and Taisho Japan of the intergenerational paradigm of homosexual behaviour 'in the homosocial environments of schools, colleges and military

academies' (McLelland 2005: 30) with the transgender paradigm of the *kagama* in the context of male prostitution. If the *kagama*, the male prostitute of pre-Meiji Japan, reappears as the 'new *kagama*' in the Taisho period, the same representation of the male prostitute as feminine is, as we have seen, also found in the person of the *danshō* or *okama* of postwar journalism – this is the subject of 'Tōkyō *okama kumiai hōmonki*' ('Record of a visit to the Tokyo union of *okama*', Kurumada 1949) published in *Bakuro* in 1949 and is also the language of the *Ryōki* article mentioned above, 'Nanshoku *kaidō wo yuku*.' Yūichi's homosexual relationships in *Forbidden Colours* fall into two categories: they are either intergenerational (Count Kaburagi and Kawada, as well as Shunsuke, with Yūichi as the younger partner; and Minoru, with Yūichi as the elder partner) or they arise from the context of café *Rudon*, which is characterized by effeminacy and based loosely on prostitution – the two main elements of the gender-ambivalent *danshō* paradigm.

THE ALLUSIVE NETWORK

The network of allusions that allows the system of desire encapsulated in the term *nanshoku* to be represented in *Forbidden Colours* functions through a number of distinct mechanisms. Firstly, in the most general sense, allusion to a set of cultural values appropriates the authority that adheres to those values and so the simple presence of the allusion allows that desire to speak with an authority denied to the object of the sexological enquiry or the prurient journalistic exposé. This is allusion operating as camp, in the sense discussed in Chapter Five.

Secondly, allusion may provide a paradigm for the desires and relationships represented in the narrative outside the norms of contemporary discourse, directing the reader away from these norms and towards the paradigm found in earlier texts or contexts to which the allusion refers. Thirdly, allusion may validate the representation of experiences or concepts, such as male beauty or same-sex desire, which are less valued in the context of the text's production, by drawing parallels with their representation in other literary or historical contexts which valued them more highly. Fourthly, allusion may encode a character or relationship in the text as another character or relationship in a preexisting text, so that the former is implicitly endowed with the qualities, or simply the cultural authority, of the latter.

The episode of the 'gay party' held at Jackie's house in Ōiso, at which Yūichi is seduced by Count Kaburagi, illustrates the way in which a combination of references to classical antiquity and to Japanese literary tradition provides authority for the expression of same-sex desire. Above the fireplace in Jackie's house hangs a nude portrait of the host, painted by his English ex-lover, in which Jackie is styled as a young Bacchus, champagne glass in hand and with ivy around his brow (MZ 3: 212). Although this may be taken simply as a token of the host's bad taste, the painting encapsulates the use to which classical allusion is put as in the nineteenth-century (and earlier) European art that it follows, the depiction of a sexually desirable naked boy is rendered presentable by his transformation into a figure of classical mythology. By this allusion, produced by the boy's pose and the presence of wineglass and ivy, the devalued is given cultural authority. Mishima establishes a relationship between the scene in his narrative and the authoritative images of Western art and classical mythology by much

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the same mechanism as Jackie's lover has used in his painting, although he distances himself from the association by having someone other than his own narrative voice (the painter) make it. The same association, with the same distancing effect, is made by the presence in the room where Kaburagi seduces Yūichi of another picture, this time 'a reproduction of a picture of the sleeping Endymion bathed in moonlight' (222). The scene of Kaburagi's desire for Yūichi is juxtaposed with the image of the beautiful youth loved by the moon.² Kaburagi's desire is also authorized by allusion to another source, this time Japanese: when his seduction of over a thousand boys is discussed in the narrative, it is explained with a quotation from Saikaku: 'taking pleasure with boys is like a wolf sleeping under falling blossom' (213).

The quotation from Saikaku can also be seen as providing a paradigm for Kaburagi's strenuous pursuit of erotic adventure, by allowing the reader to set his sexual interest in youths against the backdrop of Saikaku's *Nanshoku ōkagami* (The Great Mirror of Male Love) and the Edo culture of same-sex desire which it describes. This provision of a paradigm means that not only is Kaburagi saved from being merely a postwar roué by being cast as a Saikaku-esque connoisseur of boys, but also the pattern of his desire – that of an older man for a youth – is authorized by its relation to an antecedent. However the allusions to this Japanese paradigm are mixed with allusions to classical Greece as the source of another paradigm for same-sex desire and it is the Greek that appears first in the course of the narrative. In describing Yūichi's attempts since puberty to sublimate his homosexual desires, the narrative tells us: 'He bore

² The story of Endymion was treated by Theocritus and Propertius, and in modern times by Keats. This beautiful youth wished to be always young and, depending on the version of the myth followed, either wished for perpetual sleep or was put into a perpetual sleep by Diana (the moon), after she saw him sleeping naked on Mount Latmos. She is said to have come down from the heavens nightly to be with

himself in purity. Dedication to mathematics and sports, geometry and calculus, the high jump and swimming – this Greek choice was not an especially conscious choice' (MZ 3: 42-3). He is then described as overcome by sexual desire as a result of his proximity to other naked youths during athletics, 'when a younger student took off his sweat-stained shirt in the room of the athletics club' (43). References to Greece are present throughout the narrative and are particularly important in framing the relationship between Yūichi and Shunsuke (discussed below), but their significance in providing a paradigm for Yūichi's erotic life is perhaps best illustrated by two aspects of 'Greek love' identified by the contemporary author of the article on 'The love of the Greeks – some things about *nanshoku*' mentioned above. This article, published in the February 1947 edition of the magazine *Sei bunka* (*Sexual Culture*) notes, firstly, that '*nanshoku* in Greece was a means of character building and a social phenomenon to which not only individuals but even the legislative body paid great attention, and it was also a beneficial method of education'; and, secondly, that 'in Greece it was an honour for a youth to have many men as lovers' (Tominaga: 56-7). If these were the points that a contemporary journalist saw as noteworthy for a Japanese readership, they suggest what the representation of Yūichi gains by its association with the Greek paradigm: it becomes possible to see his desire for his own sex and attachments to older men as consonant with the behaviour of a well-educated young man and not just something to be categorized as perversion.

Mishima's appropriation of the Greek paradigm is, in a sense, a double appropriation, since the meaning ascribed to the erotic attachments of Greek antiquity by accounts such as

him.

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Tominaga's owes much to its earlier interpretation in European discourses of sexuality. This is well illustrated by Hijiya-Kirschner's observation that Mishima's figuring of Yūichi as a beautiful youth from Greek sculpture and his allusions to Plato in relation to Shunsuke are mediated by Thomas Mann's use of the same references in describing Tadzio and Aschenbach in *Death in Venice*. McLelland points to the significance of the Greek 'intergenerational model of homosexual interaction' in late nineteenth-century Europe and America as 'an elite ... practice looking back to ancient Greece for validation of relationships between adult males and younger men' (McLelland: 31) and it is no accident that Mishima, who drew on the writing of that period (as in the use of Mann in *Forbidden Colours*, but also the references to Wilde, Whitman and others in *Confessions of a Mask*), should have his characters and his narrative voice seeking validation from the same source. Mishima makes this double appropriation explicit when he discusses the homosexual's superior eye for male beauty in his description of the society of café *Rudon*. He describes this by reference to a European rediscovery of a classical Greek aesthetic: 'It is only the *nanshoku-ka* who is sensitive to the particular beauty of the male, and for the system of male beauty in Greek sculpture to be established in aesthetic terms it was necessary to wait for the *nanshoku-ka* Winckelmann' (MZ 3: 121).

The reference to Greek sculpture in the discussion of men's appreciation of male beauty that arises from the description of *Rudon* also illustrates the third mechanism through which Mishima's network of allusions functions, which is the validation of experiences which are otherwise devalued. In this case it lends cultural authority to the recognition of male beauty in the text and through the eyes of its male characters, just as a reference to Havelock Ellis

preceding the quoted passage gives scientific weight to the claim that homosexuals are more sensitive to male beauty than are women. The representation of Yūichi's beauty, in particular, is validated throughout by allusions to classical mythology and its depiction in art and literature. At his first appearance, emerging from the sea before Shunsuke's eyes, he is a mythological figure and a work of art:

It was a stunningly beautiful youth. His body, which overflowed with a tantalizing kind of gentle beauty, more like the Apollo that is supposed to be the work of a bronze sculptor of the Peloponnesus school than a sculpture of the Greek classical period, was made up of a nobly erect neck, gently sloping shoulders, the soft breadth of his chest, his elegantly rounded arms, the pure fullness of his sharply tapered torso, and his legs as manly and firm as a sword. Pausing at the edge of the sea in order to inspect his left elbow, which he appeared to have grazed on a rock, the youth slightly twisted his body and turned his face and right hand down towards his left arm. [...] Alert, narrow eyebrows, deep sad eyes, artless and rather full lips – these formed the design of his unusual profile. (MZ 3: 34)

By figuring Yūichi as a sculpture of Apollo, Mishima validates his detailed attention to the young man's body with its enumeration of desirable features. If it validates the narrative's 'queer' (in that it is viewing the male body) gaze, it also authorizes the non-queer viewer (either Shunsuke, to whose eyes Yūichi appears, or the reader who is implicated in this voyeuristic scene) to linger on the sexually desirable male body, since it is a work of art.

Here, again, there is a double appropriation, for, as Hijiya-Kirshner observes (313), there are close parallels between this scene and Aschenbach's first sight of Tadzio in *Death in Venice*, where the boy is also linked to another bronze sculpture, the Roman *Spinario*:

Aschenbach noted with astonishment the lad's perfect beauty. His face recalled the noblest moment of Greek sculpture – pale, with a sweet reserve, with clustering honey-coloured ringlets, the brow and

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nose descending in one line, the winning mouth, the expression of pure and godlike serenity. [...] No scissors had been put to the lovely hair that (like the Spinnario's) curled about his brows, above his ears, longer still in the neck. (Mann: 221)

The echoes of Mann in Mishima's description are very strong indeed – even the pose of the statue mentioned in Mann's description, which depicts a boy pulling a thorn from his left foot, suggests the pose adopted by Yūichi as he inspects his injury. Nevertheless these allusions are unmarked; it is the explicit references to classical art that perform the same function in both passages, validating the physical description. The scene of Yūichi's appearance goes on to add one more cultural allusion, by referring to the nineteenth-century English writer Walter Pater, who produced both critical writing on art and quietly homoerotic fiction:

... in these features there was a strange indescribable sweetness. Shunsuke thought that the fine lines of this beautiful youth's body were perfumed by something like what Walter Pater described, in relation to the beautiful thirteenth century story 'Amis and Amile,' as 'the early sweetness' of the Renaissance, the 'early sweetness' which foreshadowed its indescribable, enormous, mysterious, and stronger later development. (MZ 3: 34)

Yūichi's physical beauty continues to be validated by this set of allusions throughout *Forbidden Colours*. The image of Endymion which hangs above the scene of Yūichi's seduction by Count Kaburagi, reappears when Shunsuke imagines the sleeping form of Yūichi in a mirror (348). However, the character of Greek mythology with whom Yūichi is most consistently identified is Hippolytus and this illustrates the fourth mechanism through which Mishima's network of allusion functions: encoding a character or relationship in the novel as a character or relationship from an earlier (con)text. Yūichi's encoding as Hippolytus occurs in the context of his relationship with the industrialist Kawada and serves not only to figure him as the

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desirable youth of the myth but also to figure his relationship with Kawada as one that occasions jealousy. Kawada himself first makes the allusion to Hippolytus, in the course of the dinner to which he invites Yūichi and Shunsuke, mentioning the beauty of a young man he had seen playing the part of Hippolyte in a production of Racine's *Phèdre*. This makes it clear that for Kawada, as for the narrative, Western classics are a frame of reference in the field of desire. This frame of reference also functions as a code between him and Shunsuke, when Yūichi mentions his in-laws:

'You have a wife?' Kawada let out a pained shriek.

'It's alright, Kawada,' said the old writer in spite of himself. 'It's alright, this young man is an Hippolyte.' The meaning of this slightly rough synonym was immediately understood by Kawada. (340-41)

Shunsuke, by this coded allusion, invites Kawada to see Yūichi as a young man who is immune to the advances of women, reassuring him that although he has a wife he is not sexually attracted to women. Mishima makes more of the literary possibilities of the allusion later, when Yūichi, Kawada and Shunsuke go yachting in Kawada's boat off the coast of Hayama in the summer. When Shunsuke and Yūichi arrive at the basin, they are 'charmed' to find that Kawada has named his boat *Hippolyte* and Yūichi then acts out his characterization as Hippolytus by stripping down to his swimming trunks for the yachting trip and later diving off the boat, so that we see him, like Hippolytus, naked at the edge of the sea. The jealousy that is at the core of the Hippolytus myth also affects the scene, when Kawada tells Shunsuke of his jealousy when he saw a beautiful youth come into the bar of the Imperial Hotel with a foreign man, dressed in clothes exactly the same as those Yūichi was wearing, which Kawada had had made for him

(435). The chapter ends on a note of jealousy too, as Shunsuke is driven back to Tokyo alone, leaving Kawada and Yūichi in a hotel in Zushi.

The allusive network in *Forbidden Colours*, therefore, functions on a variety of scales and with varying degrees of explicitness, through the four mechanisms identified: by the (camp) appropriation of cultural authority, by the provision of paradigms, by validation, and by encoding.

SENTIMENTAL EDUCATION – EXPOUNDING THE DOCTRINE

Many as the allusions involving Yūichi are, they are largely expressed by other characters or the voice of the narrator, encoding the reader's perception of him and validating the representation of him as sexually desirable. The character whose own subjectivity is most thoroughly defined by this network of allusion is Shunsuke. As the narrative of *Forbidden Colours* progresses, he struggles to come to terms with his desire for Yūichi, which he gradually realizes may be not simply the desire to cause suffering to women through the younger man, as it is presented at first, but in fact sexual desire for Yūichi himself. Although this realization by Shunsuke is progressive, he is from the start identified with much the same set of allusions as the narrator of *Confessions of a Mask*, so that it is possible to identify Shunsuke, at least as much as Yūichi, as a development of the protagonist of the earlier novel. He is an avid consumer of what might loosely be called Western queer culture. As well as keeping a diary in French, Shunsuke has translated a number of works from French: three by J.-K. Huysmans and one by

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Georges Rodenbach (21). The identity of the writers is significant, as Huysmans' novel *À Rebours* (*Against Nature*, 1884) was a key work of late nineteenth-century Decadence, admired by Oscar Wilde and the French Symbolists, with whom Rodenbach was also associated (see France 1995: 705). So it is made clear from the outset that Shunsuke's literary tastes, at least, are queer, and the association is strengthened by the description of his Wildean taste for paradox: 'He held the firm belief that any part of one's natural talents that was expressed of its own accord was fake' (22).

As Shunsuke's desire for Yūichi becomes more apparent, it is mediated by cultural references. The classical allusions noted in relation to Yūichi come naturally to Shunsuke. In the second of the references to Endymion, it is through Shunsuke's eyes that the identification is made:

He closed his eyes and knelt in front of the triple mirror. The mirror, which he could not see, reflected an illusion of Yūichi's naked body, lying face up on a white sheet, the pillow cast aside and his beautiful, heavy head falling onto the tatami. It was perhaps because of the moonlight falling on it that his exposed throat was dimly white... The old author raised his bloodshot eyes and looked in the mirror. The sleeping Endymion disappeared. (347-8)

In Shunsuke's imaginings, then, the classical allusion functions to validate, and give form to, his fantasy of Yūichi, who thus becomes not simply a beautiful youth but the beautiful youth of myth, who exists to be visited nightly by his lover (the moon – see note 1 above). This allows Shunsuke to experience Yūichi's desirability through the medium of literary tradition, and at the same time defines Yūichi in terms of passivity – as one who is seen and desired.

Shunsuke's tastes embrace not only European decadence and classical antiquity but also medieval Japan. In the chapter entitled 'Chūta in Old age' (*Ōitaru Chūta*), we are told that, in the

time between his and Yūichi's chance encounter with Kawada and the dinner to which Kawada invites them, Shunsuke's creative powers have revived:

He had written two or three fragmentary works full of a ghastly strangeness. The era of the *Taiheiki* reappeared in them – tales that formed arabesques, with severed heads and burning temples, the divinations of the child of Hannayain, the love of the Great Priest of Daitoku Shiga temple for the Kyōgoku Concubine. Or they returned to the world of the Kagura songs, touching on the heartbreaking sadness of the man who has surrendered his childhood hair. His long essay 'Even a Day in Spring', which compared these to the 'Ionian Melancholy' of ancient Greece, also depended paradoxically on a real society like the 'meadows of Ate' described by Empedocles. (337)

It would be a challenge for any reader to unpick this mixture of Greek and Japanese references, but the effect is to suggest that Shunsuke's imagination is taken up by the literary past. The worlds of classical Greece and medieval Japan combine, in this bewildering mixture, as a source of inspiration for him, and as his emotional turmoil deepens it is to these worlds that he turns; but while Greek myth validates his desire for Yūichi, what makes the allusions to the Japanese past significant is the paradigm that it provides for his relation to the younger man.

There are two episodes in which Shunsuke explicitly introduces Yūichi to the paradigm of intergenerational same-sex relationships provided in the Japanese literary tradition. The first comes when Shunsuke invites Yūichi to meet Mrs Kaburagi, in order to put into effect his plan for her to fall in love with Yūichi. After he has introduced them, Shunsuke takes Yūichi aside in his library and shows him his copy of the *Chigo kanjō* (The Anointment of the Acolyte), which he says is 'a copy of an interesting secret book' that he has had made from an original in the Eizan Bunko library in Kyoto (91-2). The *Chigo kanjō* is indeed in the Eizan Bunko library, along with a manuscript entitled *Kō chigo shōgyō hiden* (Expounding the Sacred Doctrine of Acolytes

Secretly Transmitted – see Pflugfelder: 50), which Shunsuke describes as the second part of the *Chigo kanjō*. The contents of this Muromachi-period text are carefully linked to the relationship between Shunsuke and Yūichi, in which Yūichi has agreed to follow his orders, at this significant point in the narrative, when he is obeying those orders for the first time in attempting to ensnare Mrs Kaburagi. The passage juxtaposes the older woman whom Yūichi is to pretend to court with a model for his genuine desire for his own sex, when Shunsuke compares the adoration of the Virgin Mary in the Western tradition with the adoration of the boy acolyte in medieval Japan, contrasting the holy mother (*seibo*) with the boy (*chigo*). From the religious terminology of the ‘worship of boys’ (*chigo sūhai*), to which he draws Yūichi’s attention, Shunsuke ironically turns to what he calls ‘the start of your own salvation’ (*kimi no saido no tehajime*), from which the relevant chapter takes its title, ‘*Saido no tehajime*’. There is a strongly didactic tone to Shunsuke’s speech:

What I actually want you to read is the part of *Expounding the Sacred Doctrine of Acolytes Secretly Transmitted* that gives details of a strange ceremony of caresses. Such exquisite terms! The organ of the beloved boy is called the ‘flower of Dharma nature’ and the organ of the man is called the ‘fire of ignorance.’ What I want you to understand is this sort of thought in the *Chigo kanjō*. (91)

It is undoubtedly striking that Shunsuke should be so eager to encourage Yūichi’s understanding of historical patterns of same-sex desire. At this stage in the narrative, in the context of his wish to use Yūichi to take revenge on women, this could be read as simply an attempt to ensure the efficacy of his plans. However, given the recurrence of the allusion and the pattern of Yūichi’s relationships throughout the novel, it seems more reasonable to recognize this as providing a paradigm for those relationships, and especially for the

relationship between Yūichi and Shunsuke. Indeed Yūichi appears to have adopted at least the terminology of this paradigm when Shunsuke comes to meet him at *Rudon*. He tells Shunsuke: 'Everyone's looking at me thinking I'm your *chigo*. Somebody asked me, so I said that I was' (146).

Pflugfelder notes that the spread of notions of propriety and codes of conduct in sexual desire between men beyond elite circles of samurai and Buddhist clergy to form a 'broadly based discourse on male-male sexuality' (Pflugfelder: 45) had to wait until the growth of the publishing industry in the seventeenth century, so the popular discourse of *shudō* that he describes could strictly be distinguished from the earlier priestly tradition. However Schabow describes the debt of that popular discourse to the Buddhist tradition of the 'worship of boys' in discussing Ihara Saikaku's use in *Nanshoku ōkagami* of a 'standard iconography of male love' (Schalow: 10). It is possible, therefore, to see the popular discourse on same-sex desire, which is most prominently exemplified in Saikaku's *Nanshoku ōkagami*, as continuous with the medieval tradition of *chigo sūhai* and one that Mishima takes up in his allusions in *Forbidden Colours*.

The *chigo* paradigm is reinforced in a second episode. When Shunsuke meets Yūichi again after a long interval, during which Yūichi's relationship with Count Kaburagi has begun, we are first shown Shunsuke at home engrossed in Muromachi texts: the *Sōkonshū* and the *Shōtetsu monogatari* (MZ 3: 241). We are told how he used to like the Muromachi tale (*otogi-zōshi*) called *Suzuriwari*. He reads a poem by Shōtetsu and thinks of Yūichi. He then takes Yūichi on a trip to Kyoto, where he has the abbot of Daigoji show them the *Chigo no sōshi* (*Book of the*

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Acolytes], an erotic picture scroll, which again describes the love of priests for boys. The section which Shunsuke reads out to Yūichi is again suggestive:

Was it about the time that Ninnaji was founded? There was a priest of whom people thought extremely well. [...] With many boys attending there, there was one boy of whom he was particularly fond and who came to share his bed. Whatever their position in life, when people pass their prime their actions do not quite conform to their wishes, then though their heart may be willing it is like the moon disappearing into the earth, just like an arrow that is passing over a mountain. [253]

The passage goes on to tell how the boy himself longed for the son of his nurse, called Chūta, which Shunsuke notes is the same as the name of a beloved retainer, for whose sake a young prince chooses to sacrifice his own life in *Suzuriwari*, the tale Shunsuke has recently been reading. Later, after dining with Count Kaburagi and his wife, who have followed them to Kyoto, Shunsuke, recalling this coincidence, tries to make conversation by asking Kaburagi if he knows the meaning of the name Chūta. Kaburagi startles him by replying that Chūta is a pseudonym of his (261-2). Thus the terms in which Shunsuke has revealed to Yūichi the paradigm which would identify him as Shunsuke's *chigo* ironically point to the thwarting of his desire for Yūichi by Yūichi's relationship with another man, Kaburagi. In this sense, the paradigm is suddenly given a reality beyond Shunsuke's imagination, and one that is outside his control.

Both the *Chigo kanjō* and the *Chigo no sōshi* remain inaccessible to public viewing, but it is instructive to consider Childs' observations on the contents of the (more available) eight Muromachi-period tales known as *chigo monogatari*, in order to examine what the *chigo* paradigm means. These tales of Buddhist priests involved in homosexual love affairs with

young acolytes (*chigo*) are didactic in tone, with the priest's love and loss of the youth portrayed as a path to a greater realisation of the transience of the world and to a renunciation resulting from the priest's religious awakening (*hosshin*). 'In most of the stories an inexorable series of events develops a sense of the uncertainty of life until it climaxes in a final blow, a profound, personal loss that forces a priest to accept the futility of all attachments to this world' (Childs: 128). The relevance of the *chigo* paradigm to *Forbidden Colours* is clearer from this description, since the novel follows the narrative course shared by the *chigo monogatari* (see also Keene 1993: 1103) in a modernized and secularized version: the priest (writer) has a chance encounter with a beautiful youth, becomes enamoured of him but must lose him, leading him to renounce the world, in Shunsuke's case by suicide. It is worth noting in this context that the Muromachi genre of *otogi-zōshi*, of which *chigo monogatari* were categorized as a subset, received renewed critical attention in the Occupation period, being seen in this period of democratization as 'literature of the common people' (Keene 1993: 1093). Keene points, in particular, to the influence of Araki Yoshio's essay '*Otogi-zōshi as People's Literature*' (*Shomin bungaku toshite no otogi-zōshi*) published in 1951 (1120-21n9), which argued for the importance of the genre in this sense. An introduction to the manuscript of *Kō chigo shōgyō hiden* ('Expounding the Sacred Doctrine of Acolytes Secretly Transmitted'), the text to which Shunsuke draws Yūichi's attention in the first of the two episodes discussed above, was published in 1947 (Pflugfelder: 50n68) and the text of the *Chigo no sōshi* was published in the journal *Kinsei shomin bunka* in 1952. So, while it would be unfair to say that the *chigo* paradigm was a matter of wide public discussion in the context of *Forbidden Colours*' production, neither

were it or its wider historical background unknown.

The allusions to the Muromachi culture of same-sex desire are, therefore, not just obscure references put in the mouth of a pedantic writer, but should be read against the background of contemporary discourse, which was rediscovering the products of the Japanese past. In addition to the publications already mentioned, there was a wider interest in explaining the patterns of behaviour and expressions of desire to be found in pre-modern Japanese texts, an interest which was not limited to academic research. In 1951 and 1952, the years of *Forbidden Colours*' publication, the magazine *Ningen tankyū* published a number of articles including 'A Study of *Nanshoku*' (*Nanshoku kō*, Wake 1951), 'Edo Stories of Male Prostitutes and Perverts' (*Danshō to hentaisei no Edo kobanashi*, Miyao 1951), and in June 1952 began republishing the late Iwata Jun'ichi's series of articles entitled 'A Study of *Nanshoku* in Our Realm' (*Honchō nanshoku kō*), which had originally been published in the pre-war journal *Hanzai kagaku* between August 1930 and October 1931.

The validation by historical and literary precedent and the provision of a paradigm interrelate in Shunsuke and Yūichi's relationship, for Shunsuke appears, in the two *chigo* episodes, to encourage Yūichi on the condition that he understand the thought (*shisō*) behind the texts that he shows him. The thought, or ideology of desire that contemporary discussions of *nanshoku* were presenting to readers is that of the *shudō* model of intergenerational same-sex relationships discussed by Pflugfelder (which, as I have suggested above, can be seen

as a popularization of the medieval *chigo* paradigm). This was elaborated by Edo-period texts which idealized the relationship between a youth (*wakashu*) and an older man (*nenja*) who (ideally) took the role of educator as well as lover. Although the paradigm given in *shudō* texts assumed a difference in ages between the adult *nenja* and youthful *wakashu*, even this was somewhat elastic (Pflugfelder: 36-7) and in other respects there was no suggestion that the men and youths involved were of any specific type. The relationship of *nenja* and *wakashu* therefore did not indicate a particular sexuality but a relationship between two individuals, in which the younger 'provoked "thoughts" or "feeling" (*nen*)' in the older' (39). It would be anachronistic and forced to say simply that the relationship between Shunsuke and Yūichi is patterned precisely on this model, but it is helpful to see it in the light of this model rather than that provided by purely modern conceptions of sexuality or gay relationships. It shows the inappropriateness of simply asking 'Is Shunsuke homosexual?' and, given that the *shudō* paradigm in no way excluded sexual relationships with women and did not see a man's involvement in a relationship with another man, either as *nenja* or as *wakashu*, as precluding sex, or marriage, with a woman – in other words, was not considered formative of an identity – it makes the following statement by Matsumoto Tōru seem almost bizarre: 'What draws our attention in this confession [by Yūichi to Shunsuke of his inability to love women] is surely that he says "My body can love women." He is not entirely impotent with women. He is a "pseudo-homosexual" (*kasei-dōseiaisha*), or something similar. [...] It is surely right to consider the basis of the novel's conception to be Mishima's recognition of himself as a "pseudo-homosexual," as pointed out by Inose Naoki' (Matsumoto 2005: 134). Inose and

Matsumoto's insistence on interpreting Mishima's novel only through the heteronormative lens of 'sexuality' as they conceive it forces them to come up with the curious category of '*kasei-dōseiaisha*' rather than consider the category of *nanshoku-ka* with which the text presents us.

There is an innate instability in the term *nanshoku-ka* used by Mishima, since the practice of *nanshoku* elaborated in Edo-period texts referred (as described above) to tastes and forms of relationships, not an identity as implied by the modern term 'homosexual,' while the modern coinage *nanshoku-ka* (not used in the Edo period) clearly suggests an identity and, as argued previously, the elaboration of an identity was already a concern in *Confessions of a Mask*. However it will not do simply to conflate the concept of *nanshoku-ka* with that of *dōseiaisha*, as Inose and Matsumoto do.

Further consideration of the ideology of *nanshoku* suggests clear parallels with the relationship between Yūichi and Shunsuke. Sexual desire in the *shudō* paradigm was assumed to be one-way: 'It was the *nenja*, the "one who thought of," rather than the *wakashu*, who was defined by his subjective state of longing' (Pflugfelder: 56). The youth in this ideal was motivated by 'compassion (*nasake*) ... along with a sense of obligation (*giri*).' There is no indication of desire on the part of Yūichi for Shunsuke, but he certainly becomes the object of something approaching an obsession for the elder man. In the case of the other older men with whom he has relationships, Kawada and Kaburagi, again there is no suggestion that Yūichi feels desire for them, but a combination of compassion and obligation would seem to come close to capturing his motivation in accepting sexual relationships with them. Nevertheless, in

Mishima's deromanticized version of the world, obligation is clearly the more significant of the two and what compassion Yūichi feels soon diminishes. His obligation to all three of the older men is compelled by economic factors: Shunsuke gives him a lump sum to procure his compliance; Kaburagi employs him; and from Kawada he exacts the money with which he plans to pay off Shunsuke. This will seem less distant from the *shudō* paradigm if it is remembered that *shudō* texts in the Edo period dealt in large part with idealized relationships between boy prostitutes and their patrons. Prostitution is not only a part of the culture of *Rudon* as it is portrayed in *Forbidden Colours* but also a key trope in the representation of relationships between men and in the novel as a whole (and elsewhere in Mishima's fiction, as argued in Chapter Four).

The significance of intergenerational relationships in the picture we are given of Yūichi, the emotional pattern of his relationships with older men, the representation of so many of the sexual relationships in the novel as based on economic factors (or simply prostitution in some cases), and Shunsuke's introduction to Yūichi of the historical paradigm for same-sex desire all suggest the relevance of *nanshoku* to *Forbidden Colours*, especially given the foregrounding of the concept in contemporary discourse. However this does not mean that the paradigm gives an anachronistic definition of the desires portrayed in the novel, or of the sexual identities of the characters, in spite of the text's use of the word *nanshoku-ka*. The provision of a paradigm, which I have argued is one of the effects of Mishima's allusions, operates at the level of fantasy. There is nothing inconsistent in the comparison, for Timon Screech's description of Edo-period erotic images (*shunga*) as 'always compensatory and fanciful, ... not an objective representation

of Edo erotic behaviour' (Screech 1999: 88) may equally be applied to *shudō* texts. Whether in the form of narrative, instruction or evaluation³ they cannot be read as historiography and so the relation of the *nanshoku* paradigm to Mishima's text is one of fantasy to fantasy. The fictional character of Shunsuke exists not in a *shudō* text but in *Forbidden Colours* and, in spite of his familiarity with historical conceptions of desire, is troubled and confused by his own desire for Yūichi, as one might expect of someone who identifies himself as heterosexual within the dominant terms of contemporary discourse. The terms in which Shunsuke's desire and his relationship with Yūichi are portrayed require further consideration.

SHUNSUKE'S LOVE FOR YŪICHI – THE NENJA AND HIS ERŌMENOS

Shunsuke's feelings towards Yūichi are portrayed ambiguously. Although Yūichi begins as merely a project, he becomes a love object. Shunsuke's happiness at finding Yūichi is discussed at first entirely in terms of his usefulness to him; it is a cold delight in the possibilities of revenge that he presents. However, when he visits *Rudon* for the first time and sees Yūichi being importuned overtly by a foreigner and covertly by the young man who is interpreting for him, he is surprised by his own emotion: "Isn't it jealousy?" he asked himself. "This oppressiveness and this feeling that smoulders like embers" (MZ 3: 150). The ambiguity is clear at this point in the narrative – after all, Shunsuke's first view of Yūichi was voyeuristic: the swimmer emerging from the sea. Although his plans are all designed to give pain to women,

³ Examples of each would be, respectively: Saikaku's *Nanshoku ōkagami*; *Nanshoku masukagami*, or the earlier *Kō chigo shōgyō hiden*, the text which Shunsuke shows to Yūichi (on both see Pflugfelder: 52); and

they also allow him to enjoy vicariously those women's experiences with Yūichi, as well as other men's experiences with him, since he effectively inveigles Yūichi into divulging the details of his sex life. The pain of sexual impossibility that he imposes on the women is one that he, too, suffers in relation to Yūichi, since Yūichi could never desire him. This is made clear from the physical descriptions of the two men: Shunsuke's ugliness is described as emphatically as Yūichi's beauty.

Shunsuke's susceptibility to this beauty becomes clearer from this point (their visit to *Rudon*) onwards. His interest is still couched in terms that suggest the disinterested appreciation of the artist: 'Yūichi's existence was in the old author's heart night and day, just like something he was writing' (191). However, even this passage sounds like an infatuation as it continues: 'After a while it reached the point where on any day when he didn't hear his bright, youthful voice, even on the telephone, that whole day seemed to him cloudy and unhappy.' We are then told that Shunsuke began to explore the subculture that Yūichi had described to him and the connoisseurship he exhibits in the beauty of boys in general, his tastes and the fashionable dandyism to which he has returned all fit well with the demands of the *shudō* paradigm, however we interpret his actions:

At *Rudon*, which he often used as a place to meet Yūichi, Shunsuke was still disguising himself as 'a person of that sort.' He knew the private language, and was thoroughly familiar with the subtle meanings of their winks. He was delighted by a small, unexpected romance. One gloomy-faced youth confessed his love for this ugly old man. His most unusual of unusual tendencies was to be drawn only to men over sixty.

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Shunsuke began appearing at cafes and western restaurants here and there in the company of boys of that sort. He realised that in the subtle transition in age from boy to adult there were frequent changes of tone, as in the evening sky. (191)

There follows an explanation, in lyrical terms, of Shunsuke's aesthetic, which defines boys of eighteen to twenty-five as the most desirable, describing the changes that 'the beloved' (*aisareru mono*) undergoes during those years and marking the change from youth to adulthood (*shōnen kara seijin ni*) as the definitive one, which again recalls the *shudō* paradigm. However this is followed by a denial which seems designed to undermine its own credibility: 'Although Shunsuke recognized the beauty of each of the boys surrounding him, frankly not one of them aroused any carnal (*nikkanteki*) love in him. [...] However, it was certainly not a carnal feeling, but only when he thought of Yūichi this old man's heart fluttered for some reason.' (192).

Whatever we make of this denial of explicitly sexual desire, it is followed by a scene in which Yūichi visits Shunsuke at home and finds him engrossed in what could be described as a crash course in queer aesthetics. We immediately find Shunsuke reading Byron's *Childe Harold* – exactly the sort of European Romanticism that consoled the narrator of *Confessions of a Mask*. As he waits for Shunsuke in the writer's study:

The beautiful youth reached his hand out to the old leather books, in their original versions, on the desk next to him. Here and there in the story 'Apollo in Picardy' from the *Miscellaneous Studies* in the Macmillan edition of Pater's complete works, passages had been underlined by Shunsuke. Next to it were piled the two tattered volumes of the *Ōjōyōshū* and a large format collection of Aubrey Beardsley's pictures. (193)

Shunsuke's appreciation of male beauty finds validation once again in European aestheticism

and the classical world. Shunsuke's interest in Pater's story, though, provides another paradigm for his relationship with Yūichi, this time from European literature. 'Apollo in Picardy' is a retelling of the Apollo and Hyacinthus myth (from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*) in a monastic context. In the story the elderly Prior Saint-Jean goes on a journey to another monastery in Picardy, accompanied by the beautiful young man Hyacinth:

The Prior took with him a very youthful though devoted companion – Hyacinthus, the pet of the community. They laughed admiringly at the rebellious masses of his black hair, with blue in the depths of it, like the wings of the swallow, which refused to conform to the monkish pattern. It only grew twofold, crown upon crown, after the half-yearly shaving. And he was as neat and serviceable as he was delightful to be with. (Pater: 125)⁴

It is perhaps questionable how much Mishima expected his readership to read into these references, but they are clearly not random. The evocation of an older man's friendship with a desirable acolyte, in a monastic setting, frames the relationship between Shunsuke and Yūichi in similar terms to those provided by the *chigo* texts introduced by Shunsuke.

Shunsuke's confusion over his feelings towards Yūichi is brought to the fore in the way it mirrors Yūichi's own confusion over his feelings for Mrs Kaburagi. After she has found Yūichi having sex with her husband, she flees to Kyoto, from where she writes Yūichi an impassioned letter, which, he tells Shunsuke, convinces him that his feelings for her are love. Ironically, when he goes to *Rudon* to tell Shunsuke of this, Shunsuke is introduced as ostensibly a *nanshoku-ka* and completely rejects Yūichi's notion of a heterosexual romance: 'Yūichi was surprised that, as

⁴ There is a young man attached to the monastery who appears as an incarnation of Apollo – Brother Apollyon. Apollyon befriends Hyacinth but when they play with a discus a storm comes up and blows the discus off course, so that it strikes Hyacinth in the face and kills him. Apollyon disappears and suspicion falls upon Prior Saint-Jean, who is disgraced.

he made his way to the seat next to Yūichi's, Shunsuke exchanged greetings in a familiar way with the boys at various tables. Among the boys in the café at the time, there was not one who had not been treated by Shunsuke' (MZ 3: 309). The chapter ends with Shunsuke's peals of laughter at Yūichi's declaration of love for Mrs Kaburagi. However the opening of the following chapter reinterprets Shunsuke's laughter in terms of passion. A paragraph describing his witnessing of a volcano erupting at Kutsukake precedes the description of his laughter as 'volcanic' (*kazan no warai*; 314). Shunsuke recognises that his laughter conceals an emotion, which he himself interprets as 'a feeling of sympathy for the world.' However, fire symbols are a recurrent feature of *Forbidden Colours* and always suggest sexual passion⁵, so the presence of the symbol here leaves little doubt about what lies behind Shunsuke's reaction.

Shunsuke leads himself to the conclusion that there can be no explanation of his feeling other than sexual passion when he declares that 'there is no feeling in this world other than carnal feeling (*nikkan*)' (315). This is a notion with which Yūichi teases him moments later:

'But, Sensei, have you never once been moved by anything up until now?'

'Not moved by anything other than carnal feeling, no.'

Then the young man asked, with a half-teasing smile:

'So... not even when we first met last summer at the beach?' (317)

Shunsuke then remembers that day and the how Yūichi had looked like a Greek statue:

⁵ The title of Chapter 4, for instance, in which Yūichi goes to Hibiya Park and has his first sexual experience with a man, is 'The Effect of a Distant Fire Seen in the Twilight' (*Yūmagure ni mita enkaji no kōnō*) and it is the suggestion of a fire in the sky that drives him out of the house. Once he is in the hotel room with the boy he meets there, an image of fire accompanies the sexual act. When a student at his university takes him to a hotel for sex, he hears a fire siren in the distance (Mishima: 141).

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Was there no carnal feeling at all there, or if not then a forewarning of carnal feeling?

At that time Shunsuke, who had lived his life up to then unconnected to thought, embraced thought for the first time. Was there actually carnal feeling hidden in that thought? The old writer's constant doubts had depended on that question until today. (317)

Then after further thought Shunsuke is forced to ask himself: 'Do I not feel sexual desire for this beautiful youth?' He finally comes to the conclusion: 'I love the flesh of this young man' (318). He is forced to conclude from this that Yūichi may indeed love Mrs Kaburagi, although Mishima characteristically muddies the waters by having Yūichi concede that he does not love her as soon as Shunsuke accepts that he might. The sequence of thought and emotion is, no doubt intentionally, confusing, but we are left with something like an algebraic statement of the *shudō* paradigm: the man loves the boy, and the boy (concluding that he loves no one) is loved. By the end of this episode at *Rudon*, when Kawada appears, Shunsuke's status as a *nanshoku-ka* is taken as needing no discussion: 'This strange meeting at *Rudon* was nothing but an unspoken confession. Accordingly the two men made absolutely no mention of this self-evident subject' (324).

Shunsuke's desire for Yūichi is never consummated, though, and the older man must content himself with instructing the younger, although it is not for any spiritual purpose that he educates him, but for the entirely self-serving one of revenge. The nearest they come to a sexual experience with each other is in the most successful of Shunsuke's revenge scenarios, when Yūichi seduces Kyōko only to change places with Shunsuke in the dark, allowing the older man to have sex with her in his place. Thus it is a beautiful younger woman who eventually succumbs in Shunsuke's only sexual conquest of the novel, not the beautiful younger man he

has come to desire.

Of the two paradigms for intergenerational same-sex desire presented in the text – the Japanese and the Greek – it is the Greek that is most insistently alluded to after Shunsuke has come to realise the nature of his desire for Yūichi. The clearest literary allusion is to the Socratic dialogues of Plato, and Hijiya-Kirschnerreit has described the use of motifs borrowed from Plato's *Symposium* and *Phaidros* (Hijiya-Kirschnerreit: 313-4). In a chapter entitled 'Dialogue' (*taiwa*), Shunsuke thinks of the *Phaidros* and recalls the words of Socrates as he talks to Yūichi of the seduction of Kyōko. However it would be quite wrong to see these references as sublimating Shunsuke's desire and recasting his relationship with Yūichi as 'Platonic' in the sense of non-sexual. Shunsuke does indeed cast himself as Socrates and Yūichi as Akibiades (or Phaidros), but in order to insist on the sexual nature of desire and to fantasize about Yūichi giving himself to him sexually. He thinks:

The Greeks had the rare ability to look even at internal beauty and see form in it, as if looking at a marble sculpture. How the spirit was poisoned in later ages, worshipped by unsensual love and polluted by unsensual shame! The young and beautiful Akibiades, urged on by his sensual love for what was in Socrates, slid himself under the same coverlet and slept with him in order to rouse the passion of this man as ugly as Silenus and be loved by him. (MZ 3: 388-9)

This explicitly sexual aspect of Shunsuke's imaginative use of the Socratic allusion is not itself incongruous, since the Greek paradigm for intergenerational relationships assumed sexual desire on the part of the older man (*erastēs*) for the youth (*erōmenos*) as well as expectations of propriety and moral education similar to those implied in *shudō* texts, making the relationship

'a culturally and morally overloaded domain' (Foucault: 196). (Moral education is also one of the aspects of 'the love of the Greeks' mentioned by Tominaga, as discussed above.) The Greek paradigm of *erastēs* and *erōmenos* clearly mirrors the Japanese *nanshoku* paradigm of *nenja* and *wakashu*, both casting the elder partner as the one who desires and (ideally) educates, while the younger partner is physically desired without reciprocating but will in time outgrow his role and become the desiring elder partner of a younger man himself. However, Shunsuke's imaginative encoding of Yūichi as Akibiades fails, for after recalling the words of Akibiades in the *Symposium* he looks at Yūichi and finds reality quite different to his fantasy: 'He looked up. Yūichi was not looking in his direction. The youth was looking eagerly at some very small and trifling thing' (MZ 3: 389).

Yūichi is linked to Akibiades several times, but the scene which most clearly recalls a Socratic dialogue is the boating scene at Kamakura in Chapter 26. The references to the Hippolytus myth have already been noted, but the structure of the episode alludes strongly to the form and content of the dialogues. Two older men, against a natural background, converse on desire, art and spirit, in large chunks of dialogue interrupted by a few lines from the younger man. Kawada and Shunsuke turn to philosophizing, with references to the 'golden mean' and Spartan education. However the sentiments expressed distinguish Mishima's philosophers from Plato's, when, for instance, Shunsuke opines that 'Subtle evil is moral because it is even more beautiful than coarse goodness' (438). Shunsuke's reaction to the natural setting also identifies him as a very different sort of Socrates, exhibiting the kind of anti-lyrical response to nature that Starrs has described as a feature of Mishima's writing (Starrs: 112-5): 'Then Shunsuke, unused to

nature and over-imaginative, saw a vision of the water out to sea, which was swelling dark-blue, as piled with corpses.' (MZ 3: 434).

The allusive encoding of Shunsuke and Yūichi as Socrates and Alcibiades, and the consequent suggestion of a paradigm for their relationship and for Shunsuke's desire mirrors the use of the *nanshoku* paradigm that encodes them as *nenja* and *wakashu* – or priest and *chigo*. The two sets of allusions are interlaced in the narrative of *Forbidden Colours*, as Hijiya-Kirschnerreit recognises in her description of Mishima's 'synthesis of ... European learning and the Japanese tradition' (316). The paradigms give form to Shunsuke's desire but in both cases Mishima undercuts the effect of the allusion by returning it to reality, so that Shunsuke's relation to Yūichi as *nenja* or *erastēs* can operate only at the level of fantasy. This revenge of reality is itself consonant with the allusion to *shudō* texts, being a recurrent feature of *Nanshoku ōkagami*. Schalow notes that 'reality intrudes into the fragile mood of pleasure in Saikaku's stories through the haikaiesque technique of *kyōzame*, "waking from the spirit of fun"' (37-8). Saikaku's boys shatter the illusions of their patrons, only heightening the patrons' appreciation of pleasure. The boating episode of chapter 26, which ends with Shunsuke returning alone to Tokyo, is marked as a waking/sobering event by the chapter title: 'Sobering Summer's Advent' (*Yoizame no natsu no tōrai*). The chapter begins with the presence of Yūichi's newly born child, and after his visit to the second gay party at Ōiso it ends with the Socratic dialogue at Kamakura and Shunsuke forswearing Yūichi, when he says that they should 'part.' The 'awakening' (*same*) then is Shunsuke's disillusionment with, or disavowal of, Yūichi, and the

chapter ends with Shunsuke taking Pavinal for his neuralgic knee as he travels back to Tokyo (444). This is also the drug with which he kills himself at the end of the novel and the naming of the drug in these two contexts, given the background of the first, leaves little doubt that Shunsuke's suicide is to be connected with his love and loss of Yūichi. As noted earlier, religious awakening and disillusionment with the material world is also a feature of stories of priests and acolytes (*chigo monogatari*) and Shunsuke's suicide functions as a debased and secularized version of disillusionment, in line with his encoding as priest to Yūichi's acolyte. Disillusionment is written into Shunsuke's vision of himself in this role: as he watches Kawada with Yūichi when Kawada invites them to dinner, we read that he wonders why he has come: 'Was it an expression of the fact that, finding it very painful to compare himself to the old abbot when he saw the scroll at Daigoji, he had preferred to choose the role of the go-between Chūta?' (340). Although Kawada refers to Yūichi as 'your *chigo*' it is Kawada, not Shunsuke, who will enjoy sexual relations with Yūichi.

COMING OF AGE

The episode of Shunsuke's disillusionment is followed by the distinctly Saikakuesque episode of chapter 27 and its consequences, in which Yūichi's affair with young Minoru arouses the jealousy and scheming revenge of the boy's elder lover (and adoptive father), the merchant (owner of a coffee shop) Fukujirō. The episode bears various markers of its relation to Saikaku, in addition to the pattern of the story, while these are mixed (particularly in Minoru's fantasy)

with contemporary popular fiction: Fukujirō is the stereotypical merchant/townsmen, characterized by 'punctiliousness and miserliness' (*kichōmen to rinshoku*; 453), while Minoru's age (seventeen) and beauty mark him as a *wakashu*; Minoru builds his image of Yūichi from a variety of sources – action films, detective stories and tales (*monogatari*) – they are protagonist and companion, officer and beautiful orderly (*bishōnen no jūhei*) dying with a kiss on the battlefield, seaman and sailor (*shōnen no suifu*); around them as they sleep together are 'villains, enemies, savages and assassins' (*akkan ya kyūteki ya sanzoku ya shikaku ya*; 454). In his jealousy Fukujirō ties Minoru up naked in a cruel scene reminiscent of Saikaku's vengeful lovers – but also like something from a contemporary *kasutori* magazine.

Minoru shares with Shunsuke the development of a fantasized understanding of his real relationship with Yūichi, although his frame of reference is very different. There is therefore a double revenge of reality in the story of Minoru. The jealous Fukujirō sends an anonymous letter of blackmail to Yūichi's mother and wife, betraying his secret life to them – a crisis from which only Mrs Kaburagi's intervention is able to save him. Minoru, discovering what Fukujirō has done, steals money from him and hopes to run away with Yūichi, but Yūichi returns both the money and Minoru to Fukujirō, thus ending the affair. The episode of rivalry clearly marks Yūichi as *nenja* to Minoru's *wakashu*. By graduating from the status of *wakashu* to that of *nenja*, as all youths must do in the *shudō* paradigm upon reaching adulthood, he ends Shunsuke's fantasy. By returning him to his adoptive father, he destroys Minoru's fantasy as well.

Screech describes how women in *shunga* of the Edo period are marked as 'belonging to a lower, controlled grade' since the images 'suppose a controlling gaze that is male' (Screech: 89). The same can also be said of *wakashu* in homoerotic images of the period, he argues, in spite of the difference of gender, 'since power there also belongs to the penetrator, who is in all cases the older partner.' In *Forbidden Colours*, Yūichi, as the object of Shunsuke's – and everyone else's – gaze, is codified as *wakashu* within the *nanshoku* paradigm. But it is the fate of the *wakashu* (as it is not of the woman as object of the male gaze) to grow out of his role and come of age, to change from the object to the subject of that gaze. This is the trajectory that marks reality's revenge on Shunsuke's allusive fantasy and it is the trajectory that is explicitly described when Yūichi feels for the first time that he sees, rather than being seen – at the birth of his daughter. At the end of the scene of her birth, which Yūichi witnesses, forcing himself to watch, the change in him is clear when we are told that 'Narcissus had forgotten his own face' (406). The change is then spelled out clearly:

Yūichi's consciousness of his existence was that the whole of him was 'seen.' His feeling that he existed was, in short, the feeling that he was seen. This fresh consciousness of his existence, the sense that he existed with certainty even without being seen, intoxicated the youth. In other words, he himself *was seeing*. (406)

This change in Yūichi is followed immediately by the 'sobering' (*yoizame*) of chapter 26 (the Socratic dialogue on Kawada's yacht) and then the Minoru episode.

Yūichi's final victory over Shunsuke allows his usurpation of Shunsuke's role in the double sense of his becoming an adult lover (*nenja*) and his inheritance of Shunsuke's estate, but it is also the victory of the viewed. The subjectivity of the viewed, or the agency of the object of the

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gaze, is clearly a recurring concern throughout Mishima's work and in this case there is both a subjective change in Yūichi's perception of himself and an objective change in his circumstances and role. If there is a progression at the end of *Forbidden Colours*, it lies in this change of role, from *wakashu* to *nenja*. It is most emphatically not a change of sexuality in the modern sense, which is how Matsumoto appears to interpret it when he identifies as the key passage in the novel the scene in which Yūichi recognises Mrs Kaburagi's physical beauty on their trip to Kashikojima, after she has saved him from blackmail by pretending to have had an affair with him. (Matsumoto 2005: 147). The significance of this scene is surely Yūichi's new-found right to view and as an adult *nanshoku-ka* he may even include Mrs Kaburagi's beauty in the sweep of his gaze.

Looked at in this way, *Confessions of a Mask* and *Forbidden Colours* do seem to present an ideological shift. The narrator of *Confessions of a Mask*, who could indeed be labelled a 'failed student' (*rakutaisei*) (MZ 27: 192) in his 'failure' to achieve heterosexuality with Sonoko – which is marked by a regression (in narratological terms) at the end of the novel to a same-sex fantasy that recalls earlier fantasies – is replaced by Yūichi, who successfully graduates, not from homosexual to heterosexual, but from *wakashu* to *nenja* – from desired to desiring. While the narrator of *Confessions of a Mask* struggles to express desire from the subject position of the masturbating invert, Yūichi lives out his desire from the subject position of the *nanshoku-ka*, reproducing with his wife and taking pleasure with boys. The sexually desirable males change from distant and unattainable in *Confessions of a Mask* to viewed and open to domination in *Forbidden Colours*, as the object of Yūichi's gaze, and it is as objects of others' gaze that they

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recur throughout Mishima's career.

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